

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2015

ANIMAL WELFARE (LIVE BAITING) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 13 May 2015.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:26): I rise to support the Animal Welfare (Live Baiting) Amendment Bill 2015. As our lead speaker and other speakers have said so well, we support this bill. We certainly support animal welfare at all levels. When people saw what was aired on the *Four Corners* program on 16 February this year—a program entitled Making a Killing—it certainly shocked many, and rightly so. It was only 10 days later that we on this side announced and tabled our own bill targeting live baiting in this state.

In regard to how greyhound racing is managed in this state, monitoring and enforcement is undertaken by Greyhound Racing SA (GRSA). In regard to the airing of the program, the focus has been on the care and welfare of greyhounds rather than the detection of animal cruelty associated with greyhound training. As the member for Chaffey explained earlier, there were not any known cases in this state, but there were allegations that some dogs from this state had been trained interstate using live baiting. Greyhound Racing South Australia's existing registration system requires that all trainers and facilities be licensed and subject to random inspection, as you would expect, and penalties for breaches can attract fines of up to \$50,000 and lifetime bans from the sport.

I was just having a brief conversation with the member for Bright about this and about people who own and raise dogs, and I certainly have some in my community. It is a sport that people get involved in, and they are very passionate about it and sometimes they cannot understand it when they get reported for a breach of their licence. I remember a long-running conversation that I had with a constituent—and I think I have written to one or two ministers about it over time. He was actually standing up for a previous trainer who had passed away, and he still was not happy with what he thought was an injustice. They are passionate people, but all things need to be operated properly and effectively and, in this state and this nation, the welfare of animals is paramount and people need to be aware of that.

The prosecution, enforcement and monitoring of laws under the Animal Welfare Act 1985 is the responsibility of the RSPCA and South Australian police, and obviously that includes alleged incidents of cruelty to animals. On 23 March this year, the government announced a package of measures to target live baiting in South Australia based on the recommendations of the working group of GRSA, RSPCA South Australia, SAPOL and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources animal welfare officers.

The legislative response, which is obviously what we are debating now, seeks to amend the Animal Welfare Act 1985 to create new offences for live baiting,

releasing an animal from captivity for the purpose of it being hunted or killed, selling or supplying an animal for the purpose of live baiting and keeping an animal for the purpose of live baiting.

These offences form part of proposed new section 14—Prohibited activities, which will replace the current section 14, which only refers to organised animal fights. The maximum penalties in this section are being increased from \$20,000 or imprisonment for two years to a penalty of \$50,000 or imprisonment for four years. The new maximum penalties are consistent with other sections of the act, for instance, section 13—Ill treatment of animals.

The other critical part of the whole response in regard to greyhounds' welfare is beefing up GRSA's inspectorate, refocusing it to include detection of potential animal bait cruelty and improving protocols with the RSPCA and South Australian police. A range of actions arising from this are as follows: greater detail to be recorded in the GRSA licensing system, for instance, the location and usage of bull rings and all private racing facilities and adopting the use of 'nearmap'; increasing GRSA's animal welfare and compliance staff from one to four and improving training, including in covert detection methods; increasing the inspection rate of premises (previously on average once every two years); and better protocols between GRSA stewards and RSPCA SA and South Australian police.

As the member for Kaurua indicated earlier, Greyhound Racing SA is examining the use of aerial drones and surveillance at private racing facilities, trial tracks and registered tracks. I note that bull ring licensing, while not to be subject to government licensing, will receive specific scrutiny through improved Greyhound Racing SA inspectorate processes. All these new offences are contained within the amendments to the act in this bill.

I would just like to say that, from what I have seen over time regarding live baiting, Greyhound Racing SA responded quite promptly. I think they knew that the survival of their sport—their total survival—was something they needed to deal with because, as we know in this place, perception often wins the day. A perception that live baiting was carried out in a regular manner across South Australia would probably have meant the end of the greyhound industry.

We have obviously had discussions in this place before about other matters including the welfare of animals. I was on the Select Committee on Dogs and Cats as Companion Animals. We had feedback and witness evidence in regard to puppy farms and the like, and that is certainly something that could have the potential to happen with greyhounds.

I think this is sensible legislation. I think something like this is for anyone who loves animals. I come off the land and have a love of animals because, when you rely on those animals to make your living, you look after them. If you do not look after them, you pay the price in several ways. From this side of the house, I commend the bill, and I commend greyhound racing for being proactive from what I have seen along the way. I think they realise if they were not proactive, there would have been real consequences for this sport in South Australia. I commend the bill.