



Steven Miles

DEPUTY PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

WORKING TOGETHER FOR QUEENSLAND

29 October 2020

Mr Chay Neal
Executive Director
Animal Liberation QLD
PO Box 463 Annerley QLD 4103
Email: chay@alq.org.au

Dear Mr Neal

Thank you for your email of 21 October 2020 regarding our policy commitments in the 2020 Queensland election, and your policy proposals. The Palaszczuk Labor Government's strong health response to the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that we can now start to deliver our plan for economic recovery. This plan will support jobs, help small business, invest in Queensland's manufacturing industry, and bring forward new infrastructure for local communities.

I am pleased to provide the following responses in relation to Animal Liberation QLD's priorities.

Animal welfare

The Palaszczuk Labor Government is committed to providing legislation and standards that protect the welfare of all animals in Queensland.

The Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 provides for significantly higher penalties for animal cruelty compared to similar laws in other Australian states and territories and has strong provisions to respond to all animal cruelty allegations.

In Queensland, if a person intentionally inflicts severe pain or suffering, unlawfully kills or causes serious injury or prolonged suffering to an animal, they can be charged with the offence of serious animal cruelty under the *Criminal Code Act 1899* which carries a maximum penalty of 7 years imprisonment.

The *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* is enforced jointly by Biosecurity Queensland and RSPCA Queensland under an agreement that defines the roles and responsibilities of each agency.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government is doing more to monitor animal welfare complaints through the appointment of a dedicated and experienced officer to proactively oversee the complaint process.

Our commitment to animal welfare was demonstrated by recent amendments to the *Animal Care and Protection Act* that make it clear that if a person leaves an animal to suffer in a hot car, they face being charged with animal cruelty offences. Inspectors appointed under the Animal Care and Protection Act have also been given increased powers to deal with abandoned animals.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Board also provides advice on significant animal welfare issues impacting Queensland's industries and the community.

Last year, the Palaszczuk Labor Government acted immediately to establish an independent Inquiry (the Martin Inquiry) in response to the airing of the 7:30 story about the management of retired racehorses.

Our government demonstrated its commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare by supporting in full, in part or in principle all 55 recommendations from the Martin Inquiry.

This has been backed by \$4.7 million for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to strengthen regulation and oversight of facilities accepting horses for slaughter, their transport to these facilities, and to promote good welfare outcomes, not only for racehorses, but all horses in Queensland. This work is continuing despite the challenges that our workforce is facing during the response to COVID 19.

Greyhound racing

The Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry (resulting in the MacSporran Report), led by Mr Alan MacSporran QC, was commissioned by the Palaszczuk Labor Government immediately after the live baiting scandal in 2015, and made 15 recommendations, aimed at improving integrity and animal welfare in the racing industry.

These recommendations included establishing the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (the Commission) on 1 July 2016, which is charged with keeping racing animals safe, both on and off the track.

There are a number of initiatives evolving out of the MacSporran Report's recommendations that have been introduced, or are being considered, to further protect racing greyhounds, including:

- *Lifetime tracking for greyhounds*: the Commission has implemented its new web-based information system, RandLE (Registration and Licensing Environment), which gives it the capacity to ensure animal welfare standards are maintained throughout a greyhound's racing life through improved and increased data capture.
- *Increased funding to the Commission's Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP)*: since the Commission was established to 31 May 2020, the Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP) has rehomed 1 035 greyhounds, including 220 greyhounds in 2019-20. The program continues to flourish, supported by proactive marketing and community and industry engagement programs.
- *Pre-screening for potential GAP participants*: means greyhounds now receive a veterinary examination and behavioural assessment to identify any physical or behavioural issues that may preclude their admittance to the program. Socialisation and quality care give greyhounds the best possible chance of successful rehoming. The Commission is educating owners about the benefits of this approach.
- *The Commission's partnership with Crime Stoppers*: allows members of the public to anonymously report animal cruelty and criminal activity within the racing industry. Information on these issues should be communicated to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.
- The introduction of the Commission's '*Report Something*' portal allows anyone with information about misconduct in racing to report this information.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government recognises the racing industry's contribution to the Queensland economy and the important role it plays in the social fabric of the state.

A 2019 report by IER shows that the greyhound racing industry generates \$163.1 million in economic benefit to Queensland. It supports 1 288 full time equivalent jobs and has 4 506 participants including 1 175 volunteers.

The new venue at Yamanto is being funded from the Queensland Government's \$128 million Racing Infrastructure Fund. The RIF is predominantly made up of funds from Tabcorp's exclusive wagering

agreement with Queensland and is specifically for racing infrastructure. RQ is developing this new venue that will include:

- three tracks designed and constructed using evidence-based, best practice safety principles
- facilities that support the highest level of animal welfare and integrity needs
- a facility that will maximise racing product to wagering partners
- a customer focussed venue for patrons on and off the racecourse
- a multi-use facility for the wider Ipswich community.

I understand from RQ that specific elements will include track radius and surface banking designed to reduce excessive limb forces while racing; best-practice starting boxes, incorporating greater space between dogs; air-conditioned and sound-proofed kennels; slip mats, hygiene amenities and improved swab bays.

Rodeos

The Palaszczuk Labor Government is committed to providing legislation and standards that not only protects the reputation of Queensland's animal industries and the welfare of all animals in Queensland, including animals used in rodeos, but also meet community expectations.

The current provisions of the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* are adequate to ensure the welfare of cattle and other animals being used in rodeos and to take action where there is evidence that their welfare has been compromised. Officers appointed under the Act have powers to investigate reports of alleged cruelty or mistreatment of animals and to take appropriate action, including prosecution where necessary.

There will be ongoing consideration and consultation regarding the draft standards.

Puppy Farms

It was the Palaszczuk Labor Government which implemented a suite of measures to protect dogs used for breeding, including introducing mandatory breeder registration requirements for all dog breeders in Queensland with puppies born on or after 26 May 2017.

The Queensland Dog Breeder Register provides a dog breeder with a unique breeder identification number that they must use when giving away, selling or advertising a dog or puppy. This allows a person to contact the breeder to seek information about a puppy they want to buy.

Additionally, on 1 October 2018, the Palaszczuk Labor Government introduced mandatory animal welfare standards that all dog breeders must meet to ensure the welfare of their breeding dogs and puppies. All dog breeders, irrespective of the size of their businesses, must meet mandatory animal welfare standards for breeding dogs and their progeny.

Sharks and Marine Life

Human safety is the Palaszczuk Labor Government's top priority and the Shark Control Program (SCP) plays a vital role in protecting Queenslanders and tourists at popular beaches throughout the year.

Our government understands that many people have strong views about shark control measures.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has listened to those views and has committed \$1 million a year to research and trial alternatives that may be appropriate for Queensland. The report 'Queensland Shark Control Program: Review of Alternative Approaches' is guiding this research and subsequent trials.

Of course, the continuation of work to research and trial alternatives requires the re-election of a Palaszczuk Labor Government that is committed to that work. A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government is committed to ensuring people's safety and investing in research for future programs.

Assistance for the Exhibited Animal Sector affected by COVID-19

The Palaszczuk Labor Government also recognises the contribution that the Queensland animal exhibitors' industry provides to the Queensland economy and community. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted this industry.

That is why, on 19 May 2020, the Premier announced an extra \$50M to help support Queensland tourism businesses and iconic theme and animal parks as part of the *Queensland Economic Recovery Strategy: Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs*.

This announcement was in addition to the Federal Government announcement of a \$94.6 million support package to help Australia's zoos and aquariums get through the COVID-19 crisis on 28 April 2020.

While the support packages for tourism businesses and iconic animal parks at a state level, and zoos and aquariums at a federal level, offered welcome assistance to exhibitors, the Palaszczuk Labor Government had concerns that not all parts of the Queensland exhibited animal industry were covered.

In particular, mobile exhibits that show animal collections at a range of venues and very small wildlife parks were not eligible for these larger funding packages. On 2 June 2020, the Palaszczuk Labor Government announced an additional commitment of \$500, 000 to an emergency assistance package for businesses that exhibit animals.

The LNP inflicted massive cuts on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) when they were last in government, with Deb Frecklington as Campbell Newman's assistant to the cuts. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries saw its staff numbers drop from 2589 FTEs to 1973 FTEs. Frontline staff were not spared from the cuts, dropping from 614 to 491 – a reduction of 20%.

Now is not the time to risk the LNP's cuts. Queensland's ongoing economic and health recovery requires leadership and stability, and Deb Frecklington and the LNP are a risk to our recovery.

I urge you to communicate this message with your members. Should the Palaszczuk Labor Government be re-elected, we look forward to continuing to work with you for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Yours sincerely



STEVEN MILES MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services