

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



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1st December 2022

KAP MOVES IN PARLIAMENT TO REMOVE RSPCA'S POWERS

The RSPCA would be stripped of its law enforcement and prosecutorial powers under amendments to be pursued today by Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MPs in the Queensland Parliament.

Through amendments to Labor's *Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022*, the KAP will push for all animal welfare law enforcement responsibilities to rest solely with government employees.

KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said the Labor Bill, which was a 2020 pre-election promise and advertised as amounting to the "biggest reforms of animal welfare laws in Queensland in more than 20 years", had failed to adequately address the elephant in the room: the RSPCA.

"The Government has missed a crucial opportunity to take back control of animal welfare law enforcement in Queensland," he said.

"This could have been a chance for Labor to show the public it has a genuine willingness to correct previous governmental mistakes that have allowed the RSPCA to operate with little to no oversight and for unacceptable conflicts of interest to infiltrate our legal system.

"There have been years of controversy over the Government's and the RSPCA's relationship, the suitability of the charity-activist organisation as a law enforcement body and complaints from the organisation itself that it is not funded adequately to fulfill the role.

"The KAP's view, based on consultation conducted across the State and largely centred in rural and regional communities, is that the RSPCA should be stripped of its legal authority and left to do what it does best: charity work – this is what our amendments propose."

The KAP's amendments will also seek to delay for two years a ban on CSSP, which is a widely-used and highly-effective feral pig poison, and strike out a blanket ban on a canine behavioural tool known as pronged dog collars.

Mr Katter said the use of CSSP on rampant and destructive feral pig populations was a non-desirable but necessary evil as funding for current control methods including baiting, trapping and shooting was manifestly inadequate.

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"In relation to CSSP my concern, echoed by AgForce and many other stakeholders, is that consultation on this issue has been insufficient," he said.

"In addition, the importance of the CSSP and other tools to control the millions and millions of feral pigs occupying North Queensland has never been greater from a biosecurity perspective.

"Banning pronged dog collars is also a totally unsubstantiated policy move that is, frankly, politically-motivated – contrary to false and frail arguments being pedalled by the Premier and Minister for Agriculture Mark Furner, more dogs will die as a result of this ban than be helped.

"In the last 10 years, not a single person in Queensland has been found to have harmed a dog through the use of these collars.

"They are not designed to puncture the skin – I've worn one, I know!

"They're designed to invoke a sensory reaction in dogs that are usually undergoing behavioural training, often as a last ditch-effort to manage them and prevent them from being deemed anti-social and unsafe and needing to be euthanised.

"Should this ludicrous ban be passed the week, Labor can pat itself on the back for sending now-untrainable dogs unnecessarily to their death for the sake of a political stunt."

KAP Deputy Leader and Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto said the RSPCA was fundamentally unsuitable for the role it had been given by the State Government.

"The purpose and functions of the RSPCA make it impossible for the organisation to discharge their duties in a proper and impartial manner," he said.

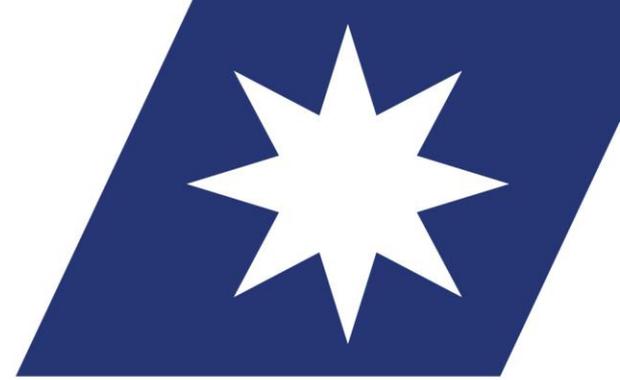
"As an animal welfare charity, the RSPCA is conflicted when it comes to prosecuting animal welfare matters, an issue that is inconsistent with the procedural fairness expected of our judicial system."

Mr Dametto said feral pigs were a major concern in his electorate, with the pests causing significant damage to crops such as sugar cane and bananas.

"I constantly hear from farmers who are desperate for solutions to control feral pig numbers, whether it be through pest control programs or funding initiatives," he said.

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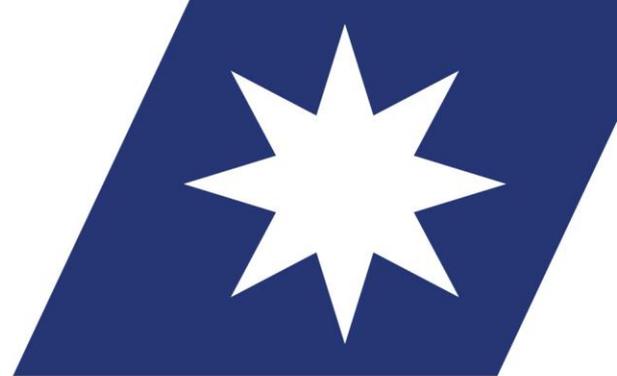
"If the option of CSSP is taken away, the Government needs to provide an alternative solution in its place."

The KAP's full suite of amendments to the *Animal Care and Protection Bill 2022* are:

- 1) **Amendment 1: Delay the ban on yellow phosphorous** - Delay for a period of two (2) years the commencement of any ban that would apply to a poison that includes the ingredients carbon disulphide and phosphorus, such as CSSP Pig Poison. This is due to the presently unacceptable biosecurity risks posed by Queensland's large feral pig populations, which could serve as a vector of Foot and Mouth disease, and the important role CSSP Pig Poisons have historically and continue to play in effectively managing these populations.
- 2) **Amendments 2-3: Require industry consultation in relation to codes of practice** – Require by law that the chief executive must collaborate and consult with the industry (through an industry representative organisation) to whom a code of practice would apply, before the code of practice is made. This process would involve the Department partnering with the representative organisation in developing alternatives and identifying preferred solutions; seeking advice and recommendations from the representative organisation in formulating solutions; and having regard to any advice or recommendations given to the chief executive by the representative organisation about the code of practice. This is to ensure codes of practice are fair, workable, and relevant to the animal-related industry to which they apply.
- 3) **Amendments 4-9: Protect the use of pronged dog collars and other restraint devices** – Provide exemptions to accredited animal trainers and persons training under their guidance in relation to the ban on pronged dog collars. This is to minimise any detrimental impacts the ban would have on pets, and their owners, who have a genuine behavioural and/or other need to legally access and use the collars as part of a professional training program. This amendment also withdraws the ability for other restraint devices to be prohibited, including collars, leashes, and muzzles, by way of regulation.
- 4) **Amendments 10, 13: Remove the RSPCA Queensland's enforcement, inspection, and prosecution powers** – Remove the ability for the chief executive to appoint under the Act a person who is not an employee of the Department as an Authorised Person or as an Inspector. Inspectors may be non-government employees in very limited circumstances when they are included in a class of individuals declared under a regulation to be an approved class of persons, however these people cannot be employees or associates of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Queensland) (RSPCA Qld). This is to ensure that enforcement of the Act occurs under the direct control of the chief executive and removes the unavoidable, and well-documented, complexities, complications and

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conflicts of interest created by engaging third party organisations – such as the RSPCA – to fulfill these responsibilities on behalf of the Department.

- 5) **Amendment 11: *Require inspectors to declare any ideological beliefs they hold that may contradict their functions under the Act*** – Require that, in addition to the new requirement for inspectors to declare any pecuniary (or other) interests they have that may interfere with their functions under the Act, they must also declare any ideological beliefs as they relate to animal-human interactions. Ideological beliefs could be, but are not limited to, beliefs around vegetarianism, veganism or the use of animals in food production, beliefs around the appropriateness of the use of animals in sports such as horse racing and rodeos; and beliefs around other past-times or behaviours that involve animals such as hunting or fishing.
- 6) **Amendment 12: *Require prosecutions to be started only by Department officers and employees*** – Require that only Department offices and employees may start prosecutions under the Act, effectively ensuring that all prosecutorial responsibility is retained by the Department. This is in addition to the amendment that requires the chief executive to appoint under the Act only Department officers and employees as an Authorised Person or as an Inspector (except in very limited circumstances).

ENDS

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