

**DOG AMENDMENT (STOP PUPPY FARMING) BILL 2021**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition)** [5.05 pm]: I nearly got started before the break. It is good to be able to make a contribution to the interestingly named Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021. I think that we do not have enough fun in this place. We should actually get a bit more enjoyment out of what we do, so I am keen to do that!

**Hon Sue Ellery**: I can think of a few ways to fix that!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS**: I am keen to build the amusement a little! Let us try to enjoy the job, shall we, as we go. The government might have had this in mind, to be honest, when it presented us with the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021. This is one of the funniest lines I have seen for a long time; it was even funnier than the line we found in the Ticket Scalping Bill a couple of nights ago, which was amusing for its own little sense. But I think this is a cracker, and this is the second reading speech.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan**: Refresh our memory about what was amusing.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS**: It was the line in the Ticket Scalping Bill that nobody could understand and nobody could define, and even once the minister's advisers explained it to the minister, all of us who were sitting here said, "We're actually no better off"! It was the one I described at the time as the Sir Humphrey clause! The minister might want to go back through *Hansard* and find the Sir Humphrey clause. This is an absolute ripper; I do enjoy this: the third sentence in the second reading speech of the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021 says this —

Other than in the short title of this amendment bill, members will not find the term "puppy farming" used.

It was so important to do something about puppy farming that the government put it in the title of the bill, but it is not actually mentioned anywhere else in the bill!

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan**: It is to enable the public to know what this is. This is the modern practice. This is a frequent practice.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS**: No; we will come to this.

*Point of Order*

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA**: I refer to the time, President. As Leader of the Opposition, should Hon Dr Steve Thomas not get 60 minutes?

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT**: Order, members. Thank you, Hon Colin de Grussa, for your intervention. The clock has been reset.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS**: I thank Hon Colin de Grussa, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I am sure that will go well when I seek an extension at the end of this hour, just to make sure that we have not underdone the bill before the house!

We were dealing with why the second reading speech might have, in its third sentence, done something quite amusing. The title of the bill is the most important part. Obviously, "dog amendment" is pretty usual in the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021, but the term "puppy farming" does not appear in the bill!

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS**: Yes; that is a different debate from today.

The term "puppy farming" does not appear in the bill. If we go to clause 8, which is the amended definitions section of the bill, surely we want to know what "puppy farming" is if we are so intent on banning it! The bill defines "dog owner number" and "health certificate", and there is even a definition of "offer", which I thought was interesting. But when we get to the P section, there is "pet shop", "pet shop approval", "pet shop certificate" and "pet shop number" —

**Hon Steve Martin**: Pet Shop Boys!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS**: No, I cannot see Pet Shop Boys. Gee, you are dating yourself now, Hon Steve Martin! My goodness.

There is no "puppy farming" definition. We are so enthusiastic about stopping puppy farming that apart from in the title of the bill, "puppy farming" is not included in the bill. Why is that? Is this just a reflection of the Labor Party's inbred hatred of farming generally?

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I have a point of order.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members! It is Thursday afternoon.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I take offence to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition that the Labor Party has a hatred of farmers. As the Leader of the Opposition would know, the only working farmer in the Western Australian Parliament is a Labor MP, and I ask that he withdraw that comment.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** On that point of order, may I point out former —

**The PRESIDENT:** Minister for Regional Development, are you making a point of order?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** I support the point of order raised by Hon Darren West. I think —

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, minister! The point of order is not debatable.

I do not consider, although I was listening closely to what the Leader of the Opposition said, that it would fall into the broad category of offensive terms at this stage, but I note the member's concern. There is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I took the member's point of order and considered it very carefully. The only part I disagreed with was the word "working"! Apart from that, I did listen to it.

Is it not interesting that the name of the stop puppy farming bill has the only reference to puppy farming? What we are trying to stop was never called puppy farming in my profession, when it first came out. We had these things called puppy factories, because offence was taken when people had a large number of dogs in restricted short pens, the dogs were not exercised and they were there to push puppies out. We called those puppy factories. I am intrigued with why the Labor Party felt the need and the urge to start vilifying farming again. Why did the government not call it "puppy factories"? The mere fact that the Labor Party could not be bothered putting "puppy farming" anywhere in the bill except for the title is absolutely telling. What does that mean? It is theatrics. I hope the new Minister for Local Government is as good at theatrics as the previous Minister for Local Government, because that is precisely what we are dealing with.

As the lead speaker for the opposition has said, the government is not opposed to restricting the abuse of dogs for breeding, but it is just astounding that the government refers to puppy farming once in the title of the bill so that its members can run around and say it. It is in all the media statements. Before the election, people probably thought the dreadful opposition was out there with sticks beating them to take our anger out on them! It was great theatrics. It was purely theatrics, though. The mere fact that the only thing that says puppy farming is the title of the bill is both hilarious and telling at the same time, because it demonstrates that this is the theatrics that we are dealing with. This is making political mileage out of something that is supposed to be a serious issue. I must admit, I thought that was the funniest thing we have seen today.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Do you not accept that that is a well-established term used by the RSPCA and is a term that has been around for many years?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It is a bad term, minister. It reflects poorly on the title of farmers and farming, and it always has. That is why most people who support both farmers and the industry —

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Member, can I quote the Australian Veterinary Association: "Puppy farming refers to the intensive over-breeding of dogs under inappropriate conditions which fail to meet the animals' behavioural ... needs".

*Tabling of Paper*

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** The minister seems to be referring to an electronic device that was the subject of some disputation yesterday. I urge for some consistency in rulings, if you do not mind.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you Hon Tjorn Sibma for pointing out that the minister in her interjection is reading from an electronic device. The minister has not finished her interjection. I will allow it to continue and I am sure at the end of that, the minister may offer to have the document she is quoting from tabled.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Should I be on my feet for her interjection?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. If you will allow the interjection to continue, I will ask the minister to finish the quote and to undertake to table the document she is quoting from. There is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** This is a well-established term as used by the Australian Veterinary Association and I am quite happy to print and table that document from an organisation that you may be familiar with.

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**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, minister. That will be the end of your interjection. I encourage members not to interject to allow the member on his feet to continue his contribution in silence as long as he does not court interjections.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Thank you, President.

As I said during earlier debates today on the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and have said previously, not everything the Veterinary Association does is right either.

However, for decades we have referred to this thing called “puppy factories”, which are dreadful things. They basically involve a large number of dogs in a minimal space, generally undercover and have very little exercise. Those who are aware of the intensive piggery system can think of slightly bigger sow stalls obviously enmeshed in. Puppy factories were there, effectively, to push out puppies as frequently as possible. There are places that try to get a second litter in a year by pushing them fairly hard. They were puppy factories. They were dreadful things. I have never been aware of any in Western Australia. In her response to the second reading debate, the Leader of the House might be able to tell us precisely how many puppy factories exist. Certainly, to some extent, the bill before the house will pick up puppy factories. As much as this is the “stop puppy farming bill”, it could easily have been called the “stop backyard breeding bill”. That is very different.

**Hon Dan Caddy:** What if you’re breeding goldfish in your backyard?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** We will wait for the Labor Party to start regulating that. This is the trend of the Labor Party. It starts regulating one thing; we are just waiting for the new set of inspectors.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Settle! The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Thank you, President.

In every piece of legislation that comes through from the Labor Party there is a new regime with a new set of inspectors. I have no doubt that at some point in the future backyard goldfish inspectors will go around to make sure that our koi are calm. That will be the next step when the next set of inspectors are in place. People will not be able to move.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** What about your Gestapo searching out arum lilies?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** The next set of arum lily inspectors will be out there as well! It just seems to be in the Labor DNA. But that is where we were.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is a bit too much background noise, even from the member’s own team.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Thank you for your protection, President.

Puppy factories is the issue we need to talk about, where they pump out puppies all the time. That is not the only focus of the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021, of course. Although the bill is an attempt to regulate dog breeding more generally, it will also have the unfortunate outcome of targeting backyard breeders, and some of those backyard breeders are the most caring and pet-friendly people you could meet.

This is where the definitions become important. This may have come up in the last few days of this debate, but I spent a long time in the veterinary profession and I imagine I probably have more experience in the dog breeding field than anyone else in the chamber. I can tell members without doubt that some of the best, most caring breeders are those who operate in their own homes. They are fantastic, caring people. Those dogs often lead a better life than some of their owners do. They are looked after. In my experience, there was a vetting process in place for finding owners for the puppies. Unfortunately, the bill before the house casts a wide net—everyone out there breeding dogs is some sort of villain, unless they are doing so in a government-approved manner. The government is saying that it will register everyone, give them breeding licences and regulate every step of the way.

The opposition is going to support this bill and try to make the best of a rather brutal situation, but I think it is important to acknowledge the good parts of the dog breeding industry, where people actually do the right thing. Right now, everyone is tarred with the brush of animal cruelty. It is not just the word “farming” that I think is offensive, but also the fact that every breeder who is not registered is somehow now branded as being cruel. That is absolutely not the case.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.