

DOG AMENDMENT (STOP PUPPY FARMING) BILL 2020

499. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the cruel practice of puppy farming and the commitment that the McGowan Labor government made to the people of Western Australia at the last election that it would bring an end to the appalling practice. Can the minister advise the house what it would mean to those who choose to overbreed or irresponsibly breed dogs, should the Liberal Party successfully block this government's legislation to stop puppy farming?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I am very pleased to answer this question; it is a very good question and a very important question. I was very pleased to be with the members for Belmont and Forrestfield on Tuesday this week when we visited the Swan Animal Haven in Maida Vale, which is run by some magnificent volunteers. Many volunteers at the animal havens, be they cat or dog havens, volunteer their time and energy to look after, in this case, neglected animals and dogs that have been abandoned and are vulnerable. They do it because of their passion for making sure that our canine friends are protected and looked after. They do it because they understand that wonderful relationship that human beings have with their canine friends.

As the member for Belmont knows, when this government went to the election in March 2017, it brought forward a policy that, if elected, it would introduce legislation to stop puppy farming. That was a policy and now we have introduced the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill into this Parliament. On Tuesday, when we began the second reading debate on this bill, it was so disappointing to hear the first sentence spoken by the shadow Minister for Local Government for the Liberal Party who said, "The Liberal Party of Western Australia will be opposing this bill." Why would they oppose a bill that is focused on ensuring that we stop an abhorrent practice known as puppy farming? What thinking would be behind their decision to oppose this bill that we have introduced into this place when we know that its focus is on reducing the number of unwanted dogs born and providing an outlet for the adoption or the sale of unwanted abandoned dogs? It is focused on having a centralised registration system so that we can track from birth to death our wonderful dogs and it no longer requires retired greyhounds to be muzzled. That legislation has strong community support throughout Western Australia, which was well consulted along with a range of stakeholders.

The community of Western Australia, in the discussions and the conversations that we had when we explained this policy, responded overwhelmingly. We received nearly 5 000 responses saying that people understand why this bill is important. This legislation will work towards that very strong need to stop puppy farming. But what did we get from the Liberal Party? It said, "We will not support this bill." That is what we got from the Liberal Party, including the members for Nedlands, Kalgoorlie, Cottesloe, Riverton, Dawesville and Darling Range who spoke in the second reading debate. All of them opposed this bill. Why would they do that when we know that this bill is focused on protecting our pups when they are born, making sure that we trace very carefully the breeding of these pups, and during their lifetime? We want to ensure that the people who purchase pups understand the important responsibility that they are taking on and know what they are purchasing. There are lots of examples of people who have purchased a pup or a dog from a puppy farm, many of them paying thousands of dollars, and not got what they paid for. Indeed, that dog might have a range of health problems and end up passing away very early in their life. Why would members opposite oppose this bill? First, they do not understand the policy; and, second, they do not understand the importance of animal welfare in Western Australia.

The member asked what would happen if this bill is blocked by the Liberal Party when it votes against it in this place or the upper house. I know that members opposite are backtracking a little because they are worried about this situation. They understand that thousands of people in the community support this policy and understand far better than members opposite, who do not even have an inkling, that this policy is the right policy to protect our pups and dogs going forward. We made concessions to ensure that working dogs are exempted from sterilisation. We understood the need for that and it will be in the regulations. But this Liberal Party is so far out of touch with the community of Western Australia that it is condemned for its opposition to this bill.

I look forward to the consideration in detail that we are in the middle of, and the third reading. We want the Liberal Party to know that if it opposes this bill in the other place, we will take it to the next election and remind every person in Western Australia that the people who wanted to stop this important policy position, this important law, belonged to the Liberal Party, led by the Leader of the Opposition and a hapless group of mangy supporters.