

DOG AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Third Reading

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range — Minister for Local Government) [10.54 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [10.54 am]: I take this opportunity to wrap up my feelings on the Dog Amendment Bill 2013 and hopefully put together comments from the range of stakeholders who have spoken with me and, I am sure, many other members over the past 12 months as they have tried to give input to the development of this legislation. I start by saying that I think everyone in the state welcomes an opportunity to review a piece of legislation that is badly out of date. I certainly acknowledge that it is no mean feat to have got it into the house and almost through the Assembly under these conditions. This debate goes to the heart of many families in Western Australia, because companion animals are quite literally part of the family. It is a very passionate subject for many people. I want to put on the record some of the concerns that I raised last night and during the second reading debate before we finish the debate on the bill.

If we are looking for experts in animal behaviour or dog management, we can turn to an organisation such as the Australian Veterinary Association for its insights into the workings and potential impact of this kind of legislation, particularly on community safety and the safety of our companion animals. Its media release of Monday, 13 August 2012, states —

“We hear about horrific dog bite incidents that tend to attract extensive media attention, and governments turn to policies that include banning or controlling particular breeds of dogs.

“These incidents are certainly tragic, especially as children are often the victims.

“But measures that ban dog breeds aren’t effective in addressing aggression in dogs, don’t increase public safety and are expensive and unworkable.

The AVA has put forward its own suggested model of what the best scientific research, experience and legislative models from around the world tell us we should in fact be doing, and I will refer to that before I sit down.

It is important to remember that most dogs do not bite and that most bites happen in homes with familiar family pets. We need to address those incidents, as well as those that happen in public places. I have very close personal experience of this. I have been attacked three times by dogs while I have been walking my dogs. One of my constituents asked me why I oppose parts of this bill; I do not oppose all of it. She had been through a very bad incident in which her little dog had been attacked by a cross-breed in Maylands. The first of the three dog attacks that my dogs and I endured was from a blue heeler, which caused significant damage to my then seven-month-old puppy. The second attack was by a Rottweiler that got in through the fence of my property and attacked one of my dogs; \$2 000 later, but with significant long-term damage, the dog survived—thank goodness. The third attack was by a Weimaraner. I have Weimaraners and, while we were out walking, another Weimaraner attacked. Not one of those dogs would normally be considered dangerous, probably with the exception of the Rottweiler, which has had its fair share of curses attached to it over the years, mainly because of the film *The Omen*. The first time I ever saw a Rottweiler was in that film, and it had big teeth and was savage and salivating. It was about the same time that Rottweilers became the curse of the dog world. I have had very close, personal experience of dog attacks. Those attacks were not carried out by anything even remotely resembling a pit bull terrier, a Staffordshire terrier, an American pit bull or any variation thereof; the public would not necessarily immediately understand how the breeds of dog that were involved in the attacks could attack other dogs.

Dr K.D. Hames: If any of those dogs had attacked your dog, it probably would not have been saved by the vet.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I do not know; that is a hypothetical situation, minister.

The idea that pit bulls and Staffordshire terriers can lock their jaws is a myth; it is not based on any scientific evidence. It is a well-documented myth about these dogs. I will not go into that, because this bill does not target those dogs in any real sense; it will just make it easier for people to classify a dog as a dangerous dog. We know about the restricted breeds—there are five of them. We know we are not allowed to breed them in Western Australia.

One of the concerns we went over in great detail last night, and for which I was unfortunately unable to win the minister’s support for an amendment, was around the identification of the correct kind of training that will be required by local rangers in implementing these measures. I was arguing for a minimum standard, such as a certificate III in companion animal services. As I said, that information was given to me by the gentleman who runs the course on animal behaviour management for TAFE colleges in WA. I thought he was quite a good person to put forward that suggestion, but the government unfortunately saw fit to not agree to that amendment.

There is basically no stipulation. I beg the minister to ensure that the regulations very clearly state what an acceptable standard of training is. Rangers are much maligned in this process, but quite often they are just not given the training they need to implement these things. I referred last night to some instances involving dogs being picked up by rangers and scanned for microchips, but the microchips being missed. I have an account from September last year, which states —

Think we need some serious overhaul of scanning for chips ... three dogs in rescue this week with missed chips by councils.

That is one comment. I do not want to sound like I am being down on local government rangers; as I said, they are concerned about implementing this bill and are one of the key stakeholder groups that I have been speaking with.

Some information from the Saving Pets website states —

While pounds and shelters blame ‘the public’ for their predicament —

That is, of having too many dogs or cats in them —

... animals who have never seen abuse or mistreatment, enter pounds and shelters and are:

moved from individual councils to ‘super pounds’ —

This is what might happen; the minister referred to it last night, so I will refer to it today. For instance, the Bayswater council has a pound and other councils have pounds. When councils are amalgamated to form super councils, super pounds will also be formed. When this happens, and the animals that have been captured are moved to these super pounds, according to the Saving Pets website they will be —

often many kilometres from their homes

held for ‘minimum holding periods’ for as little as 72hrs (WA) ...

I acknowledge that this bill will make that period seven days, which is a good change. However, unless a significant attempt is made to find the owners of these animals, the owners will be unlikely to go as far afield as to the super pounds to find their dogs. The information continues —

not scanned for a microchip and their photograph not placed online to help their owners locate them

killed on intake if owner surrender ...

not vaccinated on intake, leading to dangerous disease outbreaks

killed for common and curable diseases

For instance, a dog could be killed because it has a common or curable disease such as parvovirus or kennel cough, which is what we were trying to think about last night. Why would someone not want to register a dog that had something like that? The website also provides some examples, such as —

A NSW pound was found to be driving live dogs to the local rubbish tip and shooting them. This task was completed by a single ranger, suggesting that the dogs killed in this manner were agreeable and tame.

The dogs just stood there and were shot. Further —

A WA pound held a dog for 10 days while failing to notify the owner who had contacted them the day it went missing and left a description. It was only reunited when a local rescue group saw a photo and made the connection ...

This next example did not happen in Western Australia but it is the kind of thing that could easily happen. The website states —

A ... pound killed a jack russell dog who escaped during a storm. Her owners had phoned to claim her but the pound was closed on Fridays. When they went to collect her on Monday she was already dead.

Also —

A Victorian pound failed to reunite a golden retriever and his family after it was found his microchipping paperwork was in the owners, ex-partner’s name. When the ex-partner was notified and went to make the collection the next day, the dog was already dead.

The website also notes —

A regional WA council successfully lobbied to change its kill method from injection by a veterinarian, to animals being shot with a firearm. This was to ‘save money’.

I have on occasion needed rangers to come onto my property to shoot kangaroos that had been injured in car accidents or had broken bones and were dying on my property. Rather than seeing them die a horrible death, I preferred to get a ranger in to shoot them. I hate to say it, but it has been a bit scary. The rangers do not get many opportunities to shoot live animals. I have seen a ranger take two shots at a kangaroo that was already dying and was hopping around the paddock trying to escape while the ranger chased it. These are not small blokes; these are big blokes with shotguns. It is just not acceptable. Again according to the Saving Pets website —

Gloucester Shire Council in NSW has been found to be driving live animals to the local rubbish tip, then simply shooting them one by one and dumping them in landfill. In this instance it was 11 dogs, with 5 of them being puppies.

This will happen here unless we are very careful. It is something we simply should not take for granted. Rangers cannot be left on their own to try to implement these measures. Local government must invest in training rangers, but they must know what an acceptable training course is. The minister mentioned last night that there is a training program. I know, because rangers have told me, that that training program is vastly inadequate. Therefore, all the things I have just spoken about—these horrible things that are happening—are quite likely to happen more frequently because rangers are being given the capacity to remove dogs more easily. That means that there will be more capacity for the system to go wrong.

The latest figures I have for WA is that 33 000 dogs a year are euthanased. For the information of members, the average age of dogs in Australia is four. That is not because they die young but because most dogs are euthanased or put down before they reach the age of six, so the median age is pulled down by that. This is not a good story. I have figures from 2012 on how councils deal with stray and unwanted dogs. It goes through every council, but I will not go through them all. The council with the highest impound rate in that year was Wanneroo, with 1 095 dogs impounded. Wanneroo council returned and rehomed 1 041 of those dogs, which was well done. It had to euthanase only 54 of them, which represents 4.9 per cent of the impounded dogs, compared with Armadale, which euthanased 18.4 per cent of the dogs, and Gosnells, which euthanased 16.4 per cent. These figures provide evidence of what we were talking about last night; in some areas that perhaps have a greater prevalence of low-income families, the number of dogs impounded, not able to be rehomed and therefore euthanased is quite high. In some ways I think this policy is a little broad in its scope. It would have served the community well to have had a little more targeted view—perhaps by postcode—of how this kind of change will be implemented. That might have a far greater impact on improving the lives of dogs in this state.

One subject we have spoken about extensively is how to tell whether a dog is a mixed-breed dog. I found a quote that I wanted to add to the *Hansard* record from the second edition of a book called *Dog Bible: The Definitive Source for All Things Dog*, edited by Kristin Mehus-Roe from 2009. It states, according to my notes —

Domesticated dogs are members of the species *Canis familiaris*. Even breeds that look very different from each other, are essentially the same type of animal. In fact, if dogs of ten different breeds were left to breed unchecked for several generations, the resulting dogs would look basically the same.

This again goes to the point of how difficult this bill is making the identification of dogs and the burden of proof for any individual who is trying to prove the breeding of their dog.

I am particularly concerned about dog rescue and foster programs. The minister said it is essential to know a dog's parentage to have it registered. One of the things we are trying to do to eradicate puppy farms is reduce the number of puppies and kittens sold in pet shops, online, on shopping centre boards or out of backyards. The problem here is that when people buy those puppies, they are often buying from an unknown source. They are taking a huge risk because they do not know the dog's parentage, and they might not be able to get that dog registered. This will not lower the instances of abuse of the system; it will probably raise the incidences of unwanted dogs because once a person realises that they cannot register the dog, what is stopping them from just dumping it?

The other link that needs to be made—I would urge the government to find some way to facilitate this across our community—is to try to encourage local government authorities to work more closely with shelters and pet rescue centres. I know some members have had conversations with local government authorities, and know that people at the authorities cringe and quake when pet rescue is mentioned. They run a thousand miles and make fairly disparaging comments. Not all local governments do that; some of them have set up very productive relationships with shelters. I know that the Cat Haven has a relationship with some of the pet shops in the metropolitan area by which it provides all the kittens sold. The kittens go from a rescue situation to being sold in a pet shop already microchipped and sterilised. That is okay. They are the kind of links that we should be making. We should encourage local government authorities to work with rescue groups so that they can take a more active role in trying to find where the pet comes from and join the pet with its family as soon as possible.

[Interruption.]

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: I apologise to the member for Maylands.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. I am sure the member for Maylands accepts the member's apology.

Ms L.L. BAKER: That is all right; it happens.

The two most effective ways to save homeless pets have been documented by New South Wales. The first is proactive pound management, which I hope local governments will commit to. Proactive pound management means that all pets should be scanned for microchips in the field. When a ranger is out and finds a stray cat, dog, guinea pig, bunny or whatever, they have the scanning equipment with them in the car and can scan the dog or cat while out on the road. Quite often the pet has just run out of someone's yard and can then be returned very easily to its home. This saves a lot of time, money and stress for all concerned. But it should be incumbent upon the rangers who pick up the animals to scan them in the field. I feel the same way about some members, Deputy Premier!

Dr K.D. Hames: I was just talking about my scanner.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Returning stray pets directly to their owners rather than impounding them is by far the best outcome. Reducing and offering billing options for impounding fees is another essential element that has been proven to be a good way of addressing the excessive number of animals being euthanased in pounds. Offering people credit arrangements to pay off fines is essential. It would be silly of local government not to consider these kinds of changes and options. Listing photographs of impounded pets online is another option. I know that the City of Bayswater has a Facebook or screen page that can be searched to see whether someone's dog or cat has been picked up. Not every council does this—they should. Members may not be in the loop with this, but a little retriever has been lost in the northern suburbs for some months and there has been a huge array of Facebook and Twitter conversations trying to locate that stolen pet.

Another critical element I mentioned when talking about the dreadful stories of companion pets being impounded and euthanased is that animal pounds need to be open after hours and on weekends and public holidays. It does not make sense to have them open only from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm; that might be when pets get out but it is certainly not when hardworking parents and families are trying and find their pets after getting home. Nothing is more frustrating than ringing the local pound looking for a lost puppy and no-one is there. People cannot even find out whether the ranger has picked up their dog or cat. A good suggestion is to use volunteer pet detectives to follow up on lost pet reports. It requires a little bit of coordination by local government authorities but it has been proven to work. There are some really interesting people in this world who make it their life's passion to reunite companion animals with their homes. It is silly to not use them; they are a free resource and they are very keen to help. I have already mentioned collaborating with rescue groups and other animal welfare groups. These are the key ways that New South Wales is addressing the problem.

I now speak about something that has been proven to work in addressing the problem of dangerous dogs and dog attacks. At the moment the only place in the developed world that has been documented is Calgary, Canada; it is the only jurisdiction in the world that has had a significant reduction in dog attacks due to programs implemented. I must tell members that Calgary did this without implementing any breed-specific legislation and with minimum penalties. Its main focus is on education. This bill has made an attempt to start to look at education as part of the solution, but in my view the balance is not right yet. That is why I am so keen to push for a review of this legislation after a five-year period. Perhaps we can adjust the balance between the punitive side of things—the punishment, fines and removal of pets—with educating people. If it were up to me, I would make sure that every person who wanted a cat or a dog had to complete a proper education program before they were given the cat or dog—for their safety as well as that of the cat or dog.

We pick up the newspaper and read about attacks, but if we ring and find out some details about the recent attacks, we find that quite often it is unsupervised children running riot—simply behaving like kids. That is what kids do; they run about, they make sharp movements, they yell and scream and jump up and down and they hold eye contact. They do all the things that are directly interpreted by a strange dog as aggressive and challenging human behaviour. We choose to have animals in our lives. We are meant to be the clever ones. It should be up to us to understand enough about animal behaviour so that we do not back these dogs into a corner, and then see these horrendous attacks occurring. We need to take every opportunity to assist and educate domestic dogs' caregivers.

I now want to quote from a paper by Cecile Ashen-Young, who is an animal behaviourist at a university in Western Australia. She states —

Education programs must be well designed, appropriately targeted, and presented by appropriately qualified individuals. They must be scientifically evaluated to ensure that they result in the required current knowledge and best practice strategies. For example, a common misconception among dog

owners is that dominance is the underlying motivation for aggression. This misconception is perpetuated by the popular media and by unqualified, “traditional” dog trainers.

In fact, aggression is motivated by fear, anxiety, stress, or pain and can be a manifestation of behavioural and/or physical disorders.

I agree. Effective legislation should ensure that a dog does not bite—not punish it for biting. This is what Calgary has done so effectively: while tightening up and increasing the penalties, it has tackled the right end of the problem.

The paper goes on to say that effective legislation should ensure the following —

- Prospective caregivers are provided educated assistance in making good choices and adjusting their expectations associated with caring for a dog.

A lady who lives down the end of my road has just gotten a Weimaraner puppy and I saw her trying to walk it the other day. She was getting dragged up and down the street and the poor little dog was being choked.

I stopped and said to her, “They’re a bit of a handful, aren’t they?”, and she said, “Oh, yes; my fly in, fly out daughter has just bought this puppy”. Her daughter has bought this huge dog. I have had Weimaraners all my life. They are very social creatures, and if they are not walked and entertained, they will be trouble. That is just lunacy.

To continue —

- Breeders are guided in breeding for temperament rather than form, and in empirically-based methods of raising and socializing behaviourally healthy puppies.
- Support and incentives are provided for attending puppy socialization classes *run by qualified individuals*.

Those words are in italics. That goes back to the debate that we had. It continues —

- Dog owners are educated on the importance of lifelong training for their companions.
- Dog owners are educated on the benefits of spay/neuter and low cost spay/neuter programs are provided to the community.

That is assuming that low-cost sterilisation programs are available; and, indeed, they should be available. It continues —

- Public education is provided on how to recognize and respond to canine body language, including comprehensive education programs for caregivers and parents.
- Children must be taught at an early age (0-4y, kindergarten and primary school) skills in interacting with dogs and in dog safety.

If this does not occur, we will end up with nasty incidents and children will grow up to be frightened of animals and frightened of dogs. That is not a good outcome for anyone. It continues —

- Leash laws are strictly enforced to control unrestrained and at large dogs.
- Education is provided on responsible dog ownership and the behavioural needs of the domestic dog.

The article goes on to say —

Effective legislation must be breed neutral.

I applaud the minister for going down this line; that is the only way to go. It continues —

Any dog that has exhibited any level of aggressive behaviour directed at either humans or other animals must be referred to a veterinarian or veterinary behaviourist.

That is because we cannot make a decision, when a ranger picks up a dog, about why that dog has responded in a particular way. Therefore, best practice is to call a veterinarian or a behaviourist to find out why the dog has behaved in that way. This is not cheap, but it is a better and more humane option than having the dog put down.

The article goes on to say —

Qualified dog trainers have the skills and knowledge to address certain problematic behaviours that occur in identifiable, discrete contexts and that do not pose a risk to others. However, if a dog presents with multiple behaviour problems that occur in several contexts, or if a dog is exhibiting behaviours that

put others at risk, the dog should be referred on to qualified individuals such as veterinarians, veterinary behaviourists, and qualified applied animal behaviourists.

The Calgary model is a system that works. This approach by the Calgary authority helps to facilitate a \$5 million annual operating budget, generated through licence and penalty revenues, with absolutely no cost to the taxpayer. Calgary is a community of about the same size as Perth, Western Australia. Fees generated from cat licences have provided the community of Calgary with a state-of-the-art facility staffed by full-time vets that provides no-charge spay and neuter services for pets from low-income homes.

Bill Bruce, who is the instigator of the Calgary model, is being brought to Australia by the Victorian Barristers Association. He will be coming to Victoria in the next couple of weeks. He will also be coming to Western Australia. I am helping him to come to Western Australia by supporting his visit. He has a valuable contribution to make to this debate, and he certainly has some valuable information to pass on. As we move forward with implementing this legislation, we should look to improve it, rather than ingrain bad practice. We need to look to improve our practice all the time.

I thank the minister for getting this bill to the house. I also thank the many, many people whom I have spoken with. I thank the minister's advisers for responding to my ever-present phone calls and inquiries. They must think I am completely stupid, because I asked the same question several times. This is a complex bill, and the many people in our community who have companion animals are very cautious about this bill and are looking forward to seeing how this bill is implemented and how they can protect themselves and their animals in the future.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [11.25 am]: I rise to speak to the third reading of the Dog Amendment Bill 2012. I want to begin by acknowledging the excellent work done by the member for Maylands in presenting so many important aspects of this legislation. We recognise that this bill is about community safety. We recognise also the importance that dogs play as companion animals in our homes and in our lives. Dogs are a very important part of our lives, but they may pose a threat to community safety, and I understand that is what this legislation attempts to tackle. This legislation seeks to improve community safety. However, it also seeks to take a humane approach to looking after these important companion animals and making sure that we move away from any situation that could lead to animal cruelty, recognising that a hallmark of a humane society is the way in which we look after those who cannot speak up for themselves. It is, therefore, very important that we treat our pets as sentient beings and look after them.

I want to acknowledge some of the comments made by the member for Mirrabooka, who I think really crystallised one of our concerns about this legislation. We have a concern that this legislation tends to treat our companion animals as an item of property and not necessarily as part of a family. Most of the people who own a dog as a companion animal view that dog as part of their family, and that is perhaps where this legislation is not living up to the expectations that are held by the broader community.

However, we also need to recognise the problems that are caused by aggressive dogs. It is important to look at the circumstances that lead to a dog being an aggressive animal. Obviously one of the biggest concerns is around the socialisation of the animal and the way the animal is treated. It is nurture, not nature, that leads animal to be aggressive and cause a danger to society. Therefore, we need to encourage people to socialise their dogs at an early age so that their dog is not likely to attack a human being or, for that matter, another dog.

I noticed that during the debate on this legislation there was much discussion about training programs and a strong emphasis on the need for dog owners to take their animal to dog training to develop the bond between owner and dog and at the same time improve the socialisation of that animal. That is very important. However, I have a concern about the reliance that we are putting on a dog training sector that I am not sure is necessarily bound by the standards that we might hope for. I am also not sure that the dog training sector has the strengths that we require of it. However, the policy objective of the government may be to put this legislation through and then ensure that training services are available and easy to access so that people will be encouraged to take their dogs to that training.

Another approach, and perhaps a complementary approach, would have been to place greater emphasis on dog breeders by requiring a registration system for dog breeders. People need to recognise that when they buy an animal, they are making a very important choice and a commitment that will last for a number of years. Hopefully, people will make the right choice and choose an animal compatible with their lifestyle. That is where responsible breeders can play an important role, because they can help to guide people to be responsible dog owners. If breeders are concerned about the sort of home that their animal is going into, that will help ensure that there is compatibility between the owner and the animal. I am concerned that we have not focused enough on that aspect.

I noticed that there were comments by the RSPCA, which said that it was also disappointed that we were not going down the path of requiring breeders to be registered. I realise there would be all sorts of complexities with that, but perhaps that would have really got to the nub of the problem and taken us further towards better community safety.

I want to recognise, though, that we have many good dog breeders in the community. They are very conscientious people who do the initial screening. If a person phoned and wanted a particular breed—perhaps, as the member for Maylands said, a Weimaraner—they would speak to a Weimaraner breeder, who would ask questions about the potential owner’s capacity to provide the dog with the necessary exercise and with the necessary enclosure, and check that the family members are not too young for a more boisterous dog. Those sorts of things would be checked. That is very important and can be done through that filter of a responsible breeder checking the suitability of a future pet owner.

This leads me to puppy farms, which are at the other end of the dog breeding spectrum and about which I have grave concerns. We hear about the cruel conditions and occasionally see them on television. Bitches are continually kept in whelp and not given any time to recover. There are also problems with the sale of puppies from puppy farms that are using networks within the pet shop industry. I think that is where there is a real problem. I choose to not go to pet shops where I see puppies for sale. I do not think a pet shop is the ideal place for a puppy to be sold because it is the sort of environment in which impulse buying is encouraged and the buyer would not do the necessary research and background check on the breeding of the puppy. This gets back to one of my concerns with puppy farms. I do not think any checking is done at those farms for the soundness of the sire and dam of a future puppy. A person needs to be sure, for example, that if the puppy is a golden retriever, it is free of the genetic problems that golden retrievers are inclined to have. We would hope the sire and the dam had been screened for hip dysplasia and given a score, so the litter of puppies would be that much more likely to be a litter of sound puppies that was not inclined to get hip dysplasia. It is very important that we have responsible dog breeders because that can lead to responsible pet ownership.

I also wanted to talk about some of the very positive measures in this legislation. I note the excellent decision to remove the requirement for greyhounds to wear muzzles when in public. I think that was snuck into our current Dog Act about the time of the creation of the Cannington greyhound centre, when deals were being done to allow the establishment of greyhound racing at Cannington and a requirement was put in the Dog Act for greyhounds to wear a muzzle when in public. As the owner of a greyhound, I can assure the house that there is really no need for a greyhound to wear a muzzle. They are very placid dogs and have a very good nature. Although placing a muzzle on the dog is not a real problem for the dog, it sends the wrong message to the community by suggesting that the dog is perhaps dangerous, and that has been having a negative effect on the rate of adoption of ex-racing greyhounds. That is something that we want to avoid. Indeed, I believe we have to ask questions of the greyhound industry about its rate of euthanasing greyhound puppies. I have here an article titled “The Australian Greyhounds’ Plight” from a group known as Greyhound Freedom. One section of the article states —

No breed of dog in Australia is so over-bred as the greyhound. In 2011 there were 2,887 litters of greyhound puppies born in this country ... Based on an average of eight puppies per litter it is estimated that 23,096 greyhound puppies were born in 2011, of these only 11,800 puppies named/registered by the industry, so where did other 11,296 young greyhounds go? This is a question animal advocates have not been able to get an answer to from the industry.

The suggestion is, of course, that in 2011 about 11 000 puppies were euthanased. That, to me, seems to be an enormously high number of dogs, and suggests that we have a problem with over-breeding. That is occurring because people are looking for a particular animal that will be suitable for racing, and they are basically culling. As soon as they see a deficiency in an animal, be it in its temperament, structure or composition, they euthanase the dog. That is a sad reflection on the industry, and one that the industry needs to be continually challenged on. Similarly, I hear that the industry is exporting large numbers of dogs that perhaps have not quite made it to the track in Australia. They are being exported to Macau in particular, where I gather they are given something of a racing chance, but if they fail, they are immediately eliminated, and by that I do mean euthanased. There are some cruel aspects to the industry, and the public needs to know about those and make decisions accordingly. I feel that there is a need for the industry to improve its ways.

Looking towards some of the positive aspects of the legislation such as the microchipping provisions, the member for Maylands has raised some of the difficulties with microchipping processes. Overall, I think that initiative is positive, but I recognise that its implementation could pose some challenges.

In conclusion, it is pleasing that Parliament is recognising the important role of dogs in our community as companion animals. We are aware of the community safety risks that go with these wonderful animals. We have to acknowledge as well that there has been a trend in our community in recent times towards dogs that are

perhaps genetically more inclined to a slightly aggressive disposition. People are choosing dogs not just for watchdog purposes, but also for guarding purposes. That means that people feel justified in choosing a more aggressive-looking animal, and they are also perhaps rearing those animals to become more aggressive. I do not think that is a good state of affairs. Society should be embracing companion animals as friendly, kind and, might I say, submissive animals that know their place in the family hierarchy and are companions and loyal friends, rather than being there just to guard property. However, I know there is a message. When I have had burglaries at my place and I have had the police around, one of the first things they have asked is, “Have you got a dog to act as a guard dog?” Now my answer is, “Yes, I do have a dog—a greyhound; unfortunately he is not a good guard dog.”

Ms L.L. Baker: Do they fall over him while they’re breaking in and he’s asleep?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Fortunately, he was not hurt when my house was burgled. That was the main concern that I had. It is a sad reflection on society when people have to choose more aggressive animals just for guarding purposes.

I will conclude my remarks there. I think some useful amendments to this bill were put forward by the opposition. I recognise that, unfortunately, they were not accepted, but I support the overall endeavours of this legislation and look forward to it being on our statute book.

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range — Minister for Local Government) [11.39 am] — in reply: I thank members opposite for their support of the Dog Amendment Bill 2013. I note the member for Maylands’ passion on animal welfare in general. She is very passionate about this issue. There has been a lot of debate about this legislation in both the second reading debate and consideration in detail, but time will tell whether we have this legislation right. Questions arose about how we address dangerous dogs in the community. The list included pit bulls and pit bull terriers. When the issue was first raised 10 or 15 years ago, Alsatians were on that list but they do not appear on it today. Time has moved on. The amendment moved by the member for Maylands to review the legislation is very important. I think all members touched on one of the most important issues to do with the Dog Act in general, which was trying to put some responsibility back on owners in some form or another so that when they have a dog, they actually look after it; unlike the member for Jandakot, who looks after his dogs a little too much! I have heard a lot about Sasha and Rex!

The WA Rangers Association, through local government, had concerns about nuisance dogs. There was a fair bit of debate about that. We are trying to fix the issue of nuisance dogs—those who bark or cry next door—and how we deal with that issue. There is always tension between neighbours. We have come a long way in giving rangers more power. I am confident we have set up a good process. Even a judge in a court can recommend an owner undertake more training with a dog. We have tried to put the training process at the forefront of this legislation. Time will tell if we have it right; there are a lot of aspects to it.

When we bring legislation into this place, we try to identify where the problems are. We try to legislate, if I can use the expression, to the lowest common denominator in the community, although harsher regulations tend to impact most on those who do the right thing. We get caught in that trap. The community needs to recognise there are dangerous dogs and we need to identify them. Will this legislation stop more attacks? I do not know; time will tell. If a person has a dog that has shown aggression, at least the responsibility is now back on the owner to make sure it is identified in the community, and that it is restrained in the right place—at home. It is great that we are not following the eastern states’ model in destroying a dog. We understand that whatever happens to that dog, even if it is a dangerous dog, it can stay in the community longer, in the owner’s house, but we have to make sure they are not in the wider community.

The member for Maylands also raised the issue of lost dogs coming to the attention of rangers and being destroyed before they can be returned. Hopefully microchipping all dogs will allow them to be picked up and scanned and taken straight to the ranger, who can then take them straight back to the owner’s house. That is at no cost to the council. It has to be taken to the pound and fed until someone picks it up. Paperwork has to be filled out. It will be logged in the system that the dog was out and work can be done with the owner if, say, it was the third time it had happened. Extending the days to seven from three is fantastic. As the member for Maylands mentioned, the process of using social media is great. I know that the minute my little Byford eyes see a lost dog or cat, they connect with me. There is usually a photo asking who owns it.

The legislation was last amended in 1976. Here we are in 2013, with the member for Maylands’ amendment to review the legislation in five years’ time, because things will change. That may be by way of a sunset clause or recommendations. Only time will tell how we can get more owners trained, which is our biggest concern. The member for Gosnells mentioned puppy farms and so forth. We could start identifying those. We can all think of a reason; sometimes we have not gone far enough and maybe in some places we have gone too far, but time will tell.

I thank the opposition for its support of this legislation. We have come a long way. We will hopefully be back here within five years to review it. Maybe if we get it right, we can make some amendments. I thank members for their support, and commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.