

**CAT BILL 2011**

*Third Reading*

**MR G.M. CASTRILLI (Bunbury — Minister for Local Government)** [1.53 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro)** [1.53 pm]: I would like to take this opportunity to again reflect on this legislation and reiterate a number of observations that the opposition has made and will continue to make in the public domain and in the upper house when this legislation reaches that place.

This legislation was purported to be introduced with the objective of tackling the problem of feral cats and managing domestic cats. It is our contention that it will do neither of those things. If it does any of them, it will not do them very well at all. Other than where the words “feral cats” were introduced as a result of suggestions by the opposition, I cannot for the life of me identify where this legislation refers to feral cats. How on earth is it going to target the problem of feral cats? There is no money to be provided as a result of this legislation from the state government to target feral cats. There is no real action to be taken as a result of this legislation to target feral cats, unless the government is suggesting that the ability of local governments to provide traps might reduce the number of feral cats in the metropolitan area. There is possibly an argument that that might be the case, although some of the suggestions we have received from people in the community who care about this issue are that they are not really the problem. The problem that the government claims to be targeting by this legislation is the alleged 650 000 feral cats in the state of Western Australia. I missed a bit of the debate last night, so just as an aside, perhaps members on my side of the house might tell me whether the minister ever gave an explanation as to where that accurate or inaccurate, but certainly incredibly large, figure was obtained. What statistics, what analysis, what studies were drawn upon? What scientific evidence was produced in the course of the debate to confirm that there are 650 000 feral cats in Western Australia? Maybe there are more, maybe there are less; I have no idea. I am interested to know. Unfortunately I missed the earlier part of the debate, so I am unaware whether the minister justified that figure.

The reason I dwell upon this point is that it was frequently utilised in the media, specifically in media releases and in comments by the de facto Cat Bill minister, the member for Jandakot, to justify why these laws were necessary, why there had to be such onerous impositions on cat owners and why the government had to empower local government employees to enter the premises of someone who may or may not be a cat owner. An authorised person, under the guise of conducting an investigation into cats—that is the only justification they will need, and as long as they enter lawfully—can lawfully enter the house if someone invites them in after they have knocked on the door. The authorised person is wearing a uniform. They speak to the individual, who may be an elderly woman living on her own, who is part of a generation that accords respect to people in uniform and people in authority. By their very nature, being of that generation, they will accede to a request to enter their home. Once this person, this unknown official of local government, has entered the home, they are then there lawfully. This legislation empowers those people who have entered the house of potentially this single elderly woman to examine, seize, copy or take extracts from any documents relevant to the offence. We are not sure that there is an offence at this stage. It is part of an investigation. They could seize, examine or take copies of any document they feel like taking. The bill empowers them to take photographs, films and audio, video or other recordings. It also empowers them to direct the person to answer questions. The scenario I have outlined is not an outrageous one. It is undeniable that there would be a lot of single, elderly women living on their own who own cats. If they were confronted at their doorstep by an official, perhaps in uniform—a much younger person, who appears to be polite and requests access to conduct an investigation—they may well let them in. They would be very unlikely to be aware that the consequences of allowing that individual to enter their house lawfully would be that they are then subject to all of these onerous and outrageous powers that have been accorded to a council worker. A policeman who is investigating organised crime cannot go in and film an individual and compel them to answer questions. I asked the Attorney General whether a policeman intending to investigate organised crime or drug traffickers, once in the premises, would be able to compel an individual to answer any questions that they asked in relation to that incident. No, he would not. The Attorney General knows that. The only way they could do that is to take the individual to the Corruption and Crime Commission and demand —

**Mr C.C. Porter:** It depends on the circumstances.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Answer any questions, Attorney General. In what circumstances would they be able to —

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 7483.]