

**ANIMAL WELFARE AND TRESPASS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 10 September.

**MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys)** [1.05 pm]: I rise to speak on the Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I will be speaking as the lead speaker for the Liberal Party opposition. A lot can be said about this bill. Some of it was said by the member who spoke on behalf of the Nationals WA last week, the honourable member for Roe. There is a lot in this bill that is better than the existing law; however, a lot of other parts of this bill seem to be completely unrelated to the problem that it is trying to solve. The bill is intended to address the serious issue of protesters who cross the line from peaceful protest and who invade and trespass on people's property and try to prevent those people from doing business and, in some instances, cause harm to livestock or business processes. Significant media attention has been paid to some of these protesters, who class themselves as animal welfare activists, and sometimes as vegan activists—although, occasionally, they argue that they may not necessarily be vegans but have a broader ethical view. All those views—whether people want to protect animal welfare or to promote veganism or a form of ethics that people believe is important to them and to society—are legitimate views to hold. Everyone has the right to hold those views and everyone has the right to protest. We support that strongly. I personally support it as a supporter of freedom of the individual. We do not want to restrict that in any way.

However, over the last few years a particular group of protesters, perhaps organised or perhaps simply like-minded individuals, have been getting together and have not limited their activism to mere protest or to highlight an issue and engage in legitimate and lawful public debate, public discourse and occasionally public protest to get their views across. Instead, they have trespassed onto farms and properties that are also people's homes. Sometimes they have gone further than mere trespass—they have blockaded and protested loudly and have disrupted legitimate business activity, be it animal farming or production, butcher shops, or restaurants or cafes. We have seen that again and again. As I said, people have a right to protest legitimately. People can stand on a footpath outside a butcher shop or restaurant with a placard all they like. Good luck to them.

People can jump up and down. As long as people do not disturb the peace, they can yell as loudly as they like. People can distribute leaflets and pamphlets. People can create websites and distribute posters. People can have conversations with others walking by if they want to engage in conversation. That is all well and good, legitimate and fair, appropriate and democratic. We want to support that. But when you invade someone's farm and either deliberately or through your recklessness cause harm and damage to those people's animals or their farm property or cause fear to them and their family, that is not legitimate. When people march into a butcher shop to deliberately disrupt business—to deny that butcher's family the opportunity to sell their produce, pay off their debts, employ their staff and pay their wages and perhaps take a few dollars home themselves at the end of the day—that is not legitimate. When people march into a restaurant to disrupt that restaurant and make it nigh on impossible for that restaurant to serve its legitimate customers, that is beyond the realms of legitimate protest. We need a legal system that can clearly distinguish between the legitimate rights of people to air their grievances and protest and illegitimate actions that harm others.

Through the actions of these self-styled animal welfare and vegan activists over the last few years, when they have crossed that boundary, we have found gaps in our law that need to be fixed. The government to its credit accepted that there were gaps in the law and committed to changing the law. But the government did not do that yesterday, last week, last month, this year or last year; the government first committed to it in 2018.

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** It was 2019!

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** It was April 2019.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** It was in April 2019—so it was last year. However, April 2019 is not September 2020. It has taken a long time—more than a year—to bring a bill to Parliament.

When I was a young fella, I went to boarding school. My accounting teacher would always say, "Gentlemen, better late than never, but better never late!" The first problem that we have with this government is that it would have been better if it were not late with this legislation, because the legislation would have prevented some of the illegitimate activity that we have seen and which I think the public considers is illegitimate and ought to have been prevented. My accounting teacher also taught me that if there is a job worth doing, it is worth doing right. That is the second failure of the government in relation to the legislation before us today. It did not get it right on a number of factors. Yes, the government is increasing penalties for trespass. In the circumstances of aggravation that are described in the bill, the government is increasing penalties, and that is good. The government is increasing the penalties by a factor that perhaps is right or perhaps is not right—everyone will debate that. The government could have been a bit tougher. It could have set a higher deterrent with both the monetary penalty and potential maximum imprisonment, but the government chose instead to create an aggravated offence and increase the penalty and claimed that it

would be a more significant deterrent. I will go through the mechanics of the legislation later. I think the process itself is probably not too bad.

The government has limited the broadening of the circumstances of aggravation to a narrow set of fact circumstances around trespass onto farms or animal production places, and has not dealt with the broader issue of highly disruptive protests—they go beyond the limited range of circumstances that the government has foreseen. Yes, there may be some problems with spaces that have public access, like butcher shops and restaurants, but the government has not even turned its mind to it. How do we deal with someone who deliberately sets out to actively disrupt legitimate business activity by invading such premises or making bookings at a restaurant that they have no intention of attending as patrons? I do not think it is legitimate for someone to purchase a bottle of water and sit on a chair in a restaurant for five hours. The government has not addressed any of those issues.

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** It's not unlawful is it?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I think it is unlawful to disrupt someone's ability to earn an income. I think it is unlawful to disrupt someone's ability to operate their business. As the first law officer of the state, it is up to the Attorney General to protect those people. What is the balance between protecting the rights of a butcher and the employees of a butcher shop and protecting the rights of a vegan activist to sit on a counter and abuse people who come through the door, or perhaps gluing themselves to the door so that no-one else can get in? Whose side should our law be on? It is a very simple question to answer. It is exactly the same situation for a restaurateur. What is the balance between the rights of a restaurateur to open their doors and welcome the general public into their restaurant to buy whatever their products are—fish, meat, vegetables—and the rights of a protester to make a booking, sit on a seat in the restaurant and yell, scream and abuse other customers, the staff and the proprietor? Where do we strike that balance? The Attorney General is the first law officer of the state. Is he putting up his hands and saying that it is all too hard and he cannot do it? He should admit that he is not able to do it. He has not even tried with this legislation, and that is the first failure of this legislation. He has taken the easiest pathway—the lowest common denominator—and dealt with an extremely narrow set of fact circumstances, which are important.

As the member for Roe highlighted in his contribution—I am sure he will argue strongly and vociferously in favour of the amendments that he has on the notice paper—that does not go all the way down the food chain to where protests occur. If the government is legitimately concerned about protecting law-abiding citizens from inappropriate activism—activism that crosses the line from what is fair, legitimate and legal into what is illegitimate and ought to be unlawful—I think the government should pay good attention to those amendments. If there is a better way of doing it, perhaps the government should embrace it, rather than knocking amendments back because they were not the government's idea.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** You said that it was unlawful and now you're saying it ought to be unlawful. Which one is it?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** There is a combination. I do not know which of the fact circumstances the member is asking me about, and he knows that! There are elements that are lawful, there are elements that are unlawful and there is a grey area in the middle. It is that grey area that we are always grappling with in here. The member knows that and I know that. The member probably taught his students that at some point. There is a balance that needs to be weighed and that is what we do here all the time. We weigh up the rights of one individual against the rights of another, or we weight one group's rights against the rights of another group and we draw a line somewhere. I am telling members that right now the line with this sort of activity is tilted on the wrong side, and there has been no attempt in this legislation to fix it. Members opposite might argue that it is not the right thing to do, and that is fine. That is legitimate; have that argument and say it.

If members opposite want to say to a butcher or a restaurateur who sells meat that it is okay for their business to be disrupted on a regular basis so that their customers are shooed or scared away and they have a bunch of angry people yelling and screaming at them, their staff or their customers, and that it is okay for people to glue, chain or padlock themselves to their property, then members opposite should say that! Then every business owner, shopkeeper and employee of those businesses—restaurants, butcher shops, supermarkets and the like—will be aware of where this government stands on protecting their rights. This government should come out and say it. It should be open and honest with the public and say, "If you're a supermarket employee and you're harassed, abused, yelled and spat at and have meat ripped out of your hands by animal activists, this Labor government doesn't want to protect you." Members opposite should say it rather than pretend. What gets me angry about this stuff is that the people who will cop it in the neck are the poor, hardworking and low-paid staff—not "Mr Coles" or "Mr Woolworths". We know it is happening; we have seen it. This government has done nothing to protect those people, so it should not pretend. It should not cuddle or kiss them or give them platitudes. This government should give them legal support, but it has not done that—it has not even tried: "Yes, it's all too hard. It's not unlawful." Many things were not unlawful until they were made unlawful. I recognise that it is a tough balance to strike. If this government really, truly believed in protecting those people—the restaurateurs, the butcher shop proprietors, the employees of cafes, restaurants, supermarkets and butcher shops—it would give it a shot. If it does not care, government members

should be man or woman enough to admit that they just do not care about those business owners and employees vis-a-vis the activists and that they would rather be on the side of the activists.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** This is the first time I have noticed you being so animated, particularly about workers. I assume you are a great supporters of the unions, for example.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I support trade unionism. I have always supported trade unionism and the legitimate rights of trade unions to represent their members' interests. I have been in public life for a hell of a long time and I am sure that if the member had any examples where I have said otherwise —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** WorkChoices—were you a supporter of it?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I had no involvement in WorkChoices. The member might actually do a bit of digging around and work out that some of the organisations that I have been involved in over time were vociferous critics of the WorkChoices system, but that is not a debate for today. I was not involved in it, I was not a part of it and I was not even in public life at the time. The debate today is about the Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill, which took forever to get here and when it got here it was incomplete on protecting the people that it is meant to protect.

The government has done a bit of work. I give it credit; what it has done is fine. It has doubled the aggravated penalties and that is great. It has created this other area where it has essentially brought in a minimum penalty. I know that the Labor Party does not like minimum penalties, but it has brought one in, and I give it credit for that. The minimum penalty for when a person acts in circumstances of aggravation is \$2 400. Correct me if I have read that wrongly, because it is not my legislation. The maximum penalty is two years and a fine of \$24 000, but if a court does not sentence an adult to imprisonment, then they must be given —

(a) a community order ... that includes —

(i) a supervision requirement with a direction that the offender must not enter or remain on an animal source food production place specified, or of a kind specified, in the order; and

(ii) a community service requirement;

and

(b) a fine of at least \$2 400.

That is not a bad effort. I assume that this applies to low-level offenders or first-time offenders. They do not get a jail penalty. It does not say so, but the guidance we have in the legislation is that if it is the first time a person has gone to court, they are going to get a community order, some sort of supervision requirement with a direction that they cannot enter certain premises, a community service requirement and a fine of at least \$2 400, and then the penalties will escalate from there to the maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment and a fine of \$24 000.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** A good amount for crowd funding.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Yes, it is a good amount for crowd funding. Well put, member for Roe. I would have expected that the direction that an offender must not enter or remain on particular premises would not have been confined to "an animal source food production place specified, or of a kind specified". I would imagine that if someone went to court with this sort of charge that it should be a holistic ban. If a person has gone into one animal food production place and shown what they can do there, the order from the court would not be that they cannot go to that place or back to chicken farms—to use one example that could be of the kind specified. It would have been an order that they cannot go to any of those types of places to do this sort of stuff. But that is how the government has drafted this legislation: the order can be specific to one place or a particular kind of place. I would have thought that it should be an absolute prohibition: a person has shown their intent, so they get an order for a period that they cannot go near any of those places. That would be a better calibration of the law than what is in this bill, but this is the government's bill. It has the numbers in this place, so it can bang it through.

What the government has done so far to amend the current legislation is an improvement, and it has put in a minimum penalty of \$2 400. However, these animal activists have publicly stated that this will not be a deterrent for them, and I actually believe them. They are committed to their cause. As I said, I have absolutely no qualms with their cause whatsoever; they are entitled to that belief and opinion, but some of them also seem to have an absolute commitment to disrupting animal food production and the consumption of meat, irrespective of whether that disruption is permitted by law. One could probably argue that no law will stop a certain cohort of these activists. The only way we will stop them is to incarcerate them for a period, and then when they get out, as long as they continue to have these beliefs and this view that the law is illegitimate and they do not want to abide by it, they will continue to do these activities, and that is unfortunate in this circumstance. Is a minimum fine of \$2 400 a real deterrent? We have seen that these fines can be crowd funded. We also know that fellow travellers, people with the same belief, may be wealthy individuals, or they may not be wealthy, but believe that allocating a portion of their income or wealth to help pay

for these sorts of fines is a good idea, and they might encourage others to do things in the knowledge that their fine will be paid for them. We know that that is the case. I had hoped for a higher minimum fine than \$2 400. As I always say in this place, any penalty is worth debating. My personal view is that I would have put the minimum floor at about \$10 000. These people know what they are doing. They are not accidental trespassers or accidental tourists. They are there because they know what they are doing and they are also well versed in the law. Let us being frank, this is not a school kid or someone who woke up one morning and decided to do this type of activity.

They are well versed and seem to be pretty well organised. They know their rights, their obligations and the law. In some cases, they choose to flout the law, but not in all cases. I want to distinguish that. There are some legitimate protesters and I support them. I will always support them, no matter what their cause is. That is in my DNA and I truly believe in it. But some protesters are happy to cross the boundary and in this modern day and age, a fine of \$2 400 just does not cut it. We know that this government has an aversion to minimum jail terms so there is no minimum jail term here. Again, will a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment be a deterrent? Let us see whether it is in practice. I hope that it will be and that we will not see these people continue to do what they are doing. I am happy for them to run the public debate, protest, or screech and scream if they want to. I have no problem with any of that, but they must not invade other people's premises; disrupt animal production; threaten the health, wellbeing and lives of either animals or humans; or, in particular, deny legitimate businesspeople the right to trade. The denial of trade is an area that the government has not addressed at all in this legislation. Those comments relate to the trespass part of the bill.

Restraining orders can be issued as well. I will address that for the moment. I think this is a legitimate attempt, but it is limited to a very narrow set of facts and circumstances. We will see how they work in practice. Restraining orders will be issued to people and they will be told that they cannot do this and they cannot go there. I think that the vast majority of people who are under a restraining order will try to abide by the terms of the restraining order. But, again, we have seen individuals who say publicly that they do not care what the law says or the consequences, and that they believe in their cause so much that they will continue with their activities no matter what barriers are put in place. Will those people be bound by restraining orders? Unfortunately, they will not, but, hopefully, the operation of this bill and the amendments to the act will mean that the process will eventually catch up with them and they will serve some time in prison.

I will get to the other part of the bill before us—that is, the amendments to the Animal Welfare Act. Obviously, some of those amendments are made in contemplation of the amendments to the Criminal Code relating to trespass, and to the Restraining Orders Act to restrain people from doing some things. Some terminology is included that will be useful for the Criminal Code and the Restraining Orders Act. However, there is the issue of designated inspectors. This is where I think the government has gone completely off the rails in relation to the issue it was trying to address. Animal welfare and animal welfare standards are important and legitimate. Animal welfare issues ought to be considered seriously. I am not one of those people who dismisses animal welfare as a concern. I think that it is a legitimate concern. I do not think that I have ever said it in this place, but I have said to a lot of people that although I personally do not have pets, when I see stories about the mistreatment of animals, it fundamentally gets to me. I get seriously upset and emotional when I see those stories. I am not dismissing animal welfare as a legitimate concern.

However, the introduction of these designated inspectors is an area of the animal welfare debate that has been very controversial, especially over the last few years. Merging trespass onto animal production facilities with this idea of introducing designated inspectors and giving them certain animal welfare powers is completely and utterly counterproductive as a principle because they are not related principles. They are not related principles because the type of activism that we have seen of trespass onto animal production facilities—farms and the like—results in obnoxious activity in the Outback Jacks of the world, butcher shops, and the Brazilian restaurant in Subiaco, whose name temporarily escapes me, and, in the words of the activists themselves, has little or nothing to do with legitimate concerns about animal welfare and animal husbandry. It has more to do with the fact that they do not believe that animals ought to be raised for human consumption—full stop. Their activism is not because they think someone should be allowed to raise chickens but they do not think they are being raised well, or someone is not looking after their sheep very well or feeding their cattle the way they should. Those are legitimate animal welfare concerns, but those are not the concerns that these people have. These people do not want animals to be produced for human consumption and they do not want humans to consume animals. I note that one protester has had an epiphany about the ethics of it. That was quite interesting and, academically, I like the construct of turning it into a more ethical debate rather than veganism versus animal consumption. I think it was Mr Warden, but I do not want to put the wrong name on the record. Irrespective of that, they are not arguing that the places they are walking into are mistreating animals in the way that the general public would consider it to be mistreatment. They are arguing that those places should not be there, that those production facilities should not be there and that animals should not be used in that way.

To argue that these amendments to the Animal Welfare Act and the powers that will be given to the designated inspectors in some way addresses the legitimate concerns of animal rights protesters does not hold up in this case.

If the issue were dealing with people from Friends of Animals who walk onto farms and say that the farms do not have very high standards so they need inspectors to come and check their standards, that they are happy for the farmer to continue what they are doing, but their ratio is wrong, their feeding times are wrong or the space allocated is wrong—whatever the case may be—those would be legitimate concerns about the care of the animals in that production facility. That could be accommodated, but that is not what these people are asking for, is it? When they march onto a chicken farm or a cattle farm, or into a restaurant or a butcher shop, they are not asking for the butcher to sell more humanely raised or killed meat; they are asking that no meat be sold in that shop or that no sheep be produced on that farm. Changing animal welfare standards or introducing inspectors will not address the concerns of those protesters. For the government to argue that it is trying to address them in that way is window-dressing. It was called out. It has been called out by a number of people. This debate has been going for a long, long time. An article by Peter Law in *The Sunday Times* on 23 February 2020 headed “ALP left ‘hijacks’ new farm laws” states —

PLANS for tougher jail terms and bigger fines for vegan activists who trespass on WA farms have been “hijacked” by Labor’s Left wing, the State’s peak farm lobby group says.

...

WAFarmers Federation president Trevor Whittington —

Is that his title? Is he president?

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** He is CEO.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I thought he was CEO, but the article calls him president. It continues —

WAFarmers Federation president Trevor Whittington said increased penalties for farm trespass and animal welfare should be treated as separate issues.

“This is clearly a political move. We understand there has been pressure from the Left side of politics, who are generally closely aligned with some of the anti-intensive livestock farming activist groups — they carry similar views,” he said.

“We are disappointed the Government is using this as leverage to pursue a separate agenda. We think they are clearly separate issues. It has clearly been hijacked by some in the party.”

We in the Liberal Party agree with that. The reason we agree with it is that we know the history of these sorts of laws. We know that earlier in this term of government an attempt was made by the government—I think by the Minister for Agriculture and Food—to introduce these very similar powers into the Animal Welfare Act. When it got to this place, it was discovered that there had not been appropriate consultation. Significant concern was expressed about the introduction of those powers and, as a result, the minister created a ministerial review panel that was charged with examining this area and making a series of recommendations to that minister. The review board is chaired by Linda Black, an eminent lawyer in Perth, and comprises various experts. It is off doing its work, and I recognise that some of its work has been curtailed because of the restrictions earlier this year as a result of COVID-19. However, as far as I am aware, on 24 June, when this legislation was introduced in this place, that body had not reported and unless that report has been tabled today—I checked this again yesterday—that body still has not reported. A review is looking at this specific area, and that review was called for by the minister in response to concerns when almost identical changes were proposed earlier in this term of Parliament. I assume that this matter has gone to cabinet because this legislation was introduced by the Attorney General, not the minister for agriculture, but I assume it was done with consultation between them. All of a sudden these provisions have appeared in this legislation. Firstly, they do not legitimately address the concerns of the protesters, because the protesters are not concerned about this area. They do not care how well people groom their animals and how well they look after their animals—they do not want them to have animals for that purpose. They do not want animals to be produced for human consumption in any farm facility, so the legislation does not address any legitimate concerns of the people we are dealing with under the Criminal Code and the Restraining Orders Act changes. Secondly, it renders the government’s own review useless. Why have a review and introduce laws before that review is reported? Why do it?

I am a city boy. I am not an expert in farming, animal production or animal husbandry. I, for one, would welcome the opportunity to be informed in any decision-making by a report such as the one that was commissioned by the Minister for Agriculture and Food, chaired by Linda Black, an eminent lawyer and someone who understands animal production, with a heap of experts involved, both on the panel and also providing advice, seeking stakeholder engagement and consultation and coming up with a series of recommendations. I would love to be informed by something like that. That would help my decision-making. If the review panel came up with this sort of construction, or a similar construction —

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** You would accept it?

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** There would be something independent on the table that we could look at. I cannot foreshadow accepting something that has not been tabled and something that the Attorney General’s government

has said it does not care about. I was going to use another term! I look at the Attorney General and I become colourful in my languages as he does sometimes.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** Do not get me to use Victoria Park language.

Seriously, that is what the government has set for this review panel. Why have people legitimately become involved in the review, both as panellists and chairs, and as stakeholders contributing to the review, when the government is not even going to wait for it to be presented before it acts? That is not good government. That is not good governance.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** But the National Party complained —

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I am not the National Party. I am sure the National Party has a range of views: the Liberal Party has a range of views; the Labor Party has a range of views. I am sure the member for Armadale does not ascribe to every single view of every other government member. However, the member for Armadale, in particular, is the sort of person I know who welcomes the input of expert commentary. I am not putting words in his mouth, but I know that he welcomes that. I know he takes his job as a legislator seriously, and I do too, especially people's work I respect on a general basis, as I do with Linda Black. If the panel puts a report before us, we have to consider it seriously. We will not consider it in a glib way as the Attorney General suggests: "Oh, if they give it to you and they say that, go, 'Will you support it?'" Let us look at what they say. Why does the government not look at what they say?

What a way to treat eminent Western Australians who have been prepared to do a body of work that they believe would inform the Parliament of Western Australia and assist the Parliament to make better animal welfare laws. What a way to treat them! Sadly, it is not unparalleled. Sadly, it is not unheard of and it traverses all the political lines, but it is wrong. As parliamentarians we should call it out that it is wrong. Do not come here and ask us to support this sort of legislation-making that exposes an identical desire backed by stealthy and crafty thought in bringing in something the government wants but that the industry does not like, does not want and does not accept. The government should be transparent. If it is not going to wait for a ministerial panel to report, it should not commission the report. That is a waste of everyone's time, let alone money. If the government is ideologically wedded to these changes, it should say so. It should not sneak them in, in an attempt to otherwise deal with a legitimate concern of people who are being harmed by the activities of rabid and unlawful animal welfare protesters—activists. The government should not sneak this in under that guise because it does not stand up; it does not hold water. It does not address any legitimate concerns of those activists and it jumps the gun on a review that —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** I have been enjoying listening. You keep referring to us not addressing the concerns of the activists, but other people beside activists have a major interest in animal welfare, as you said yourself.

**Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS:** I said that. They are going through the ministerial review. That is why it was commissioned. Yes, there is a legitimate process in place. The government is de-legitimising a process that it established. That is what is happening. Yes, I accept that I said that; I think we are at unity on that. There are people out there with significant concerns. I am not close enough to know whether their concerns have a factual basis. I assume an area in there is up for debate. I assume there are some legitimate concerns and also some counterarguments, and somewhere in the middle we can get a better process. I hope we do. I am one of those people who errs on the side of getting a better process. As I said, I get emotionally cut up when I hear about the mistreatment of animals, whether they are pets or animals raised for food production. I welcome the report, but the government has not done that. It has jumped the gun.

Essentially, the opposition's position is very clear. We think that the proposals relating to the Criminal Code and the Restraining Orders Act are better than we currently have. They offer a slightly better level of protection. Are they perfect? No. Are they tough enough? Probably not, particularly the monetary penalties, but they are better than what we have. They do not cover off all the areas of legitimate concern. They cover off the areas relating to the facilities used for animal food source production, abattoirs and the like, but they do not cover the downstream facilities, as was highlighted by the member for Roe, and they certainly do not cover the retail and hospitality venues, which I accept are more of a challenge, but there has been no attempt to cover them.

The government has jumped the gun on the changes to the Animal Welfare Act relating to designated inspectors and their powers. We cannot possibly support something that debases a properly constituted review panel process and effectively renders it impotent and useless. We cannot support that in any way, shape or form.

**MR S.K. L'ESTRANGE (Churchlands)** [1.52 pm]: I, too, rise to speak on the Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 and add to the remarks made by the member for Hillarys. The opposition finds that this state Labor government, under the guidance and leadership of Premier Mark McGowan, has a complete disregard for the importance and significance of the farming sector of Western Australia. I stand today to remind people just how valuable that sector is to not only the Western Australian economy, but also the national economy. The minister would do well to understand the context of what I am about to go through because it leads to the need

for a proper and different piece of legislation to support the farming sector whilst at the same time ensuring that animal welfare is properly catered for.

The gross value of agricultural production in Western Australia in 2018–19 was \$10.7 billion. The wool component was worth almost \$1 billion on its own. The Western Australian pork industry comprises 12 per cent of the national pig herd, employing some 1 500 people along the supply chain. We have about 160 dairy farms, most of which are located in the south west of Western Australia, with 350 million litres of milk produced each year. From our sheep farms, be it wool, sheepmeat—lamb and mutton—or live sheep, we have about 14.2 million sheep. Of those, 5.7 million are sheep and lambs for meat, and they produce 72 million kilograms of wool, primarily for export markets. I am mentioning this because the importance of the farming sector to our economy and our livelihoods is significantly important.

I turn to the beef industry in Western Australia. The total value of Australia's beef production, including live exports, was \$13.1 billion in 2015–16. The value of Western Australia's beef production headed towards \$1 billion, at \$857.4 million. These are big numbers; they are important numbers. In 2016, WA had 757 000 head of cattle, 347 000 of which were for live export, valued at around \$400 million—64 000 tonnes for domestic consumption and 41 000 tonnes carcase equivalent of processed beef, exported either as frozen or chilled boxed product, worth \$171 million. WA's cattle herd is distributed between extensive pastoral regions in the north and east of the state, and smaller, more intensive, farms in the agricultural region in the south west of the state. The WA beef industry comprises approximately 4 000 cattle businesses, with 25 per cent owning more than 500 head of cattle. That is a snapshot of the agricultural sector. The minister knows perfectly well, from his time at school with boarders from farming families, the importance of that sector to families. When pieces of legislation like this are brought to this place, those farming communities pay attention to what is going on in the Parliament of Western Australia because they want to know whether they are effectively being supported.

How does the WA state Labor government treat the farming sector? Let us look at its most recent budget—the 2019–20 state budget—which seems like a lifetime ago for some of us. That budget claimed to include an additional \$131.5 million of expenditure for the farming sector. Some commentators disagreed with that claim; they thought that figure was all smoke and mirrors once again on the part of the McGowan Labor state government.

On the website of the Western Australian Farmers Federation is an article written by its CEO, Trevor Whittington, dated April 2019. I will read some components of it. He stated —

The funding really only constitutes around \$90m of new money as the remaining \$40m simply plugs the gaping hole that this government had built into their own budgets through to 2021.

...

Unfortunately it's almost impossible to directly compare the previous DAFWA and the new DPIRD budgets. With the amalgamation of three completely different departments ...

...

So in total, \$71m over forward estimates of four years equates to \$18m a year which is a far cry from the \$100m the Barnett government was allocating through R for R funding.

The WA Farmers Federation has made a pretty damning indictment on the Labor government's lack of commitment. Paragraph 8 on page 207 of state budget paper No 2, volume 1, states —

As an export-dependent State, future growth in Western Australia will need to be driven by leveraging export markets. Realising the sector's full potential will require the Government's support in working with industry to build on export readiness ...

In its own budget the government recognises the significance and importance of the farming sector, yet in its own budget allocations, as pointed out by the Western Australian Farmers Federation, in 2019 it lacked the appropriate funding to genuinely show support for that sector.

Labor governments around this country certainly have a track record that is quite disastrous in how they handle the farming sector. No better example of that is how the federal Gillard Labor government brought the beef export industry to its knees some years ago.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 6024.]