

SECOND READING SPEECH

NATURE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Mr Speaker, I move that the Bill be read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to make a minor amendment to the Nature Conservation Act 2002 that will improve the way the Act operates. The amendment is required to ensure that the new policy on wildlife imports into Tasmania can be implemented effectively.

Last year my Department developed new arrangements for wildlife imports to accommodate an increased demand for imports of a wide range of exotic animals for wildlife parks, zoos and some enthusiasts; while protecting Tasmania's enviable biosecurity status.

The new arrangements take a risk based approach to assess proposed imports into Tasmania. The assessment determines the level of threat posed by each species to the Tasmanian environment, primary industries, and the community.

Depending on the level of threat posed, the species may be placed on one of seven Schedules to the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010. Placing an animal on the different Schedules allows for a management response that is proportionate to the level of risk posed by each species.

For example, species that are deemed a serious threat may be placed on the list of Restricted (Special Purpose) Wildlife in Schedule six of the Regulations. This would provide greater restrictions on possessing the animals in Tasmania to protect the State's biosecurity status, while facilitating the importation of those animals for wildlife parks that can meet secure housing standards.

The new administrative arrangements will require more frequent amendments to the Regulations. Currently the Regulations must be re-made each time the Schedules are amended. Without the amendment this will be time consuming and may lead to delays in the administration of the new policy, which could negatively impact on wildlife parks and zoos in Tasmania.

The amendment will enable the Minister to amend the relevant Schedules by Ministerial Order, thereby streamlining the new administrative arrangements. This will make the listing process for species of wildlife consistent with the process for listing Threatened Native Vegetation Communities under the Act.

This will also make the Nature Conservation Act consistent with other similar legislation that provide for species lists to be amended by Ministerial Order.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion this Bill will improve the administrative efficiency of the Act. The amendment will streamline the new administrative arrangements to ensure that wildlife parks and zoos in Tasmania can import new species for display, provided the threat to biosecurity can be managed. The amendment will support the industry while protecting Tasmania's enviable biosecurity status.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.