



Hon Tim Mulherin MP
Member for Mackay



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Primary Industries,
Fisheries and Rural and Regional
Queensland**

Reference: CTS01778/10

11 MAR 2010

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear ^{Neil}Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 10 February 2010 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1271-09 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, regarding the present restrictions on the keeping of domestic rabbits as pets or for use as food for recovering wildlife.

I have considered the request that the House remove existing prohibitions and allow the keeping of domestic rabbits with appropriate controls and restrictions and inform you that I do not intend to change existing provisions.

European rabbits (domestic and wild breeds) (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are declared Class 2 pest animals under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002* and the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Regulation 2003*. Under this legislation, it is an offence to keep a Class 2 pest animal without a declared pest permit.

Declared pest permits are permissible for a small number of restricted activities only, including prescribed education programs and scientific research. This however does not include, or allow for the purposes of feeding to injured fauna or for the keeping of rabbits as pets.

A decision to maintain a ban on rabbits for other than specified purposes was made after extensive community consultation several years ago. During this consultation many concerns were raised, including:

- allowing people to keep rabbits causes problems when new control agents such as viruses, are released to control wild rabbits

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- wild rabbits cause extensive damage to our cropping and grazing lands and interfere with the conservation of native plants and animals. Farmers, graziers and environmentalists are generally opposed to the keeping of rabbits owing to the risks that kept rabbits might escape or be released and boost feral rabbit populations
- in other States, some people unfortunately allow pet rabbits to breed and then dump the young rabbits. A major animal welfare group is opposed to keeping rabbits as pets because dumping is cruel.

After considering all the issues, a decision was made that the risks associated with keeping rabbits for purposes other than those listed in the existing regulation outweighed the benefits they offered. I see no reason to alter this decision.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Nicole Seils, Acting Principal Advisor in my office on telephone 07 3239 3000.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Mulherin', with a stylized, cursive script.

TIM MULHERIN, MP
Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries
and Rural and Regional Queensland
Member for Mackay