



ON THE MEND: Frodo the koala is recovering well at Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital.

PHOTO: BEN BEADEN

Frodo has her day in Cabinet

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THE serious case of animal cruelty against helpless Sunshine Coast koala Frodo has spurred the State Government into creating tougher animal cruelty laws.

State cabinet yesterday approved to amend the criminal code to create a new serious animal cruelty offence carrying a maximum seven years' jail, increasing the penalty from the current maximum of two years' imprisonment.

Premier Anna Bligh said recent cases of appalling animal cruelty, such as the attack on Frodo, had rightly provoked community outrage and highlighted the need for stiffer penalties.

"People in this community care about animals and they don't want to see sickening acts of cruelty," Ms Bligh said.

Baby koala Frodo, her body riddled with 15 shotgun pellets, was found beside the body of her mother near Kenilworth in November.

She also suffered a fractured skull and significant damage to her stomach and intestines.

Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital brought the baby back from the brink of death.

Just last month she had recovered so well that she was moved into an outdoor pre-release enclosure for koala joeys, although she must remain in their care for at least another six to eight months.

Sunshine Coast Koala Wildlife Rescue founder Ray Chambers yesterday applauded the new laws, but said more had to be done to ensure those responsible for the crimes were caught.

"The police haven't found anyone in relation to Frodo's case. These laws will only work if police find

and charge those responsible," Mr Chambers said.

"It's good to see harsher penalties for this come in. This country is too soft sometimes."

Attorney-General Paul Lucas said the current Animal Care and Protection Act did not deal with wildlife or pets or farm animals whose suffering was inflicted by an owner. The new laws will plug those gaps, making it an offence to deliberately harm wildlife and strengthening laws against people who inflict pain on their own animals, Mr Lucas said.

RSPCA Queensland congratulated the government on its plan to increase penalties.

"Once again it shows that this government is taking the issue of animal cruelty seriously and is prepared to listen to community feedback," RSPCA Queensland CEO Mark Townend said.