

# Animals on the agenda

BY JENNY DENTON

NORTHERN Victoria Region's new Animal Justice Party MP Georgie Purcell was ready to hit the ground running on the first day of parliament yesterday.

"The baton seems to be being passed to me," the 30-year-old said last week, acknowledging that instead of standing beside former MP Andy Meddick in parliament, as envisioned, she had effectively replaced him as the AJP's single Victorian member.

Elected as the result of an audacious sting that took advantage of the numbers game of "preference whisperer" Glen Druery, Ms Purcell is a high achieving millennial who is a qualified lawyer and graduate of Melbourne University's Pathway to Politics Program for Women.

She is also a former union official and Mr Meddick's former chief of staff.

Unlike most of the new MPs sworn in to the 60th Victorian parliament on Tuesday, thanks to her four-year stint as a political staffer she already knows her way

around the new workplace.

"I'm really excited to get to work and I've been planning everything I want to achieve for animals over the next four years," she said.

With the government in the upper house needing six votes to pass any legislation the Coalition opposes, Ms Purcell and her fellow

crossbenchers are in a good position to advance their agendas.

For the AJP the top priority is ensuring there is no duck shooting season next year, and ultimately ending duck shooting altogether.

They also aim to see an end to jumps racing.

The party wants better support for greyhound rescue, the implementation of recommendations from a governmental taskforce on rehoming pets, and better protection of farmed animals

and smaller pets like rabbits and guinea pigs in new prevention of cruelty legislation.

Some "big issues relating to wildlife" include ending commercial kangaroo shooting, although Ms Purcell recognises it is "a big ask".

The new MP is generally positive about working with Labor on its election commitments, particularly the establishment of a series of 20 free "one-stop-shop" women's health clinics, including in regional areas.

The AJP's "range of policies" outside of animal issues also includes the legalisation of cannabis.

Although she owes her election to the upper house preference system which unbeknownst to her, her party exploited on her behalf, the young MP is committed to reforming that system.

"I think broadly, people have had their eyes open to the way the group voting ticket system in Victoria is

broken," she says. "For some time now the AJP as a party, and many other progressive minor parties have been trying to bring awareness to that issue."