



Functions of Parliament: Making law

What do you call a sleeping dinosaur?¹

One of the functions (or roles) of Queensland Parliament is to make law. A law is a very important rule that everyone in Queensland has to follow.

Case study

Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 (Qld)

As laws impact every part of our lives, it is good to know how they are made. A proposed law (called a **Bill**) must follow a specific process to become an **Act** of Parliament. We will explore this process together using a real law called the [Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 \(Qld\)](#).

Key terms

Bill: A Bill is a proposed law.

Act: A law that has been passed by the Legislative Assembly and received Royal Assent.

What is an emblem?

An emblem is a symbol or picture that stands for something important. In Queensland:

- The koala is our animal (faunal) emblem.
- The brolga is our bird emblem.
- The Barrier Reef anemone fish is our aquatic emblem.
- The Cooktown orchid is our floral emblem.



Idea for a new law

In 2020, a person from Winton (a town in central Western Queensland that is part of the [Australian Dinosaur Trail](#)) asked Queensland Parliament to make the *Diamantinasaurus matildae* ('Matilda') our fossil emblem.

Did you know? 'Matilda' was named after the Diamantina River and the song 'Waltzing Matilda,' which was first performed in Winton. Queensland Museum Curator Scott Hocknull and his colleagues named her ([Australian Age of Dinosaurs](#), 2024).



DURATION

1 to 4 lessons

LEVEL

Year 6

Year 8

Year 10 to 12

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Students will be able to:

- Explain that one function of Parliament is to make law.
- Identify where ideas for new laws can come from.
- Describe how laws are made in Queensland.
- Gather relevant data and information.
- Organise and represent data in a table.

INQUIRY QUESTION



How are laws made?

¹ A dino-snore.



STUDENT ACTIVITY 1

A petition is a way you can share your ideas or concerns. This might include an idea for a new law. If you have an idea you want the Queensland Parliament to know about, ask an adult to help you create a petition following the steps on the [Petitions webpage](#).

DIAMANTINASAURUS MATILDAE AS THE QUEENSLAND STATE FOSSIL

Eligibility - Queensland residents

Principal Petitioner: Naomi Miles Business Development Manager Lot 1 Dinosaur Way WINTON QLD 4735	Sponsoring Member: The Clerk of the Parliament Posting Date: 8/9/2020 Tabled Date: 8/9/2020 Responded By: Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP on 16/2/2021
Total Signatures - 775	

TO: The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland

The petition of citizens of Queensland and residents of the State of Queensland draws to the attention of the House the creation of a State Fossil for Queensland.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to consider the installation of *Diamantinasaurus matildae* as the Queensland State Fossil.

(The original can be viewed [here](#)).

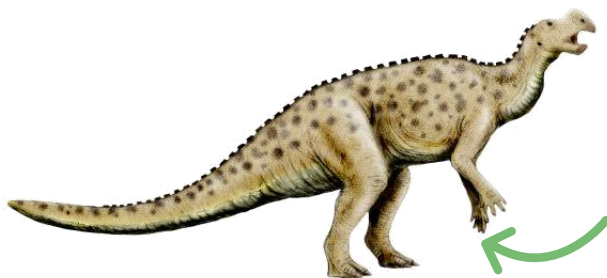
Read the petition above and answer the following questions:

1. Identify the person who created the petition (known as the petitioner).
2. Identify who the petition was addressed to.
3. Identify how many signatures the petition received.
4. Identify the date the petition was tabled.
5. Identify who responded to the petition.



EXIT TICKET

Ideas for laws can come from lots of different places. Where did the idea for the law creating a new fossil emblem come from?



In 2021, the Queensland Government (with the help of museums, tourism organisations and councils) made a list of fossils that could be our fossil emblem. They then asked Queenslanders to vote on their favourite fossil. The *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* was chosen.

Image: 'Muttaburrasaurus NT transparent' by NobuTamura (CC BY-SA 3.0)

STUDENT ACTIVITY 2

Collecting and using data can help us make decisions.

[View](#) the list of 12 fossils Queenslanders could vote for in 2021, then answer the questions below:

1. Select your favourite fossil from the list. Explain why you chose this fossil.
2. As a class, create a tally of how many votes each fossil received by asking each student to share their answer to Question 1—it's ok if some fossils get zero votes!
3. Using this information, create a bar graph.
 - a. The horizontal (long) axis should have the title 'Fossil' and list the different fossils that receive at least 1 vote.
 - b. The vertical (up) axis should have the title 'Number of votes' and show the total number of votes each fossil got.
4. Identify which fossil got the most votes in your class.
5. Compare your answer to Question 4 with most Queenslanders. Did your class agree or disagree that the *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* should be our fossil emblem?

Making a law

There are many steps or stages that Queensland Parliament follows to make a law. As we only have a one Chamber, the Legislative Assembly, we only following this process once:

- Presentation and first reading
- Committee consideration
- Committee report
- Second reading
- Consideration-in-detail
- Third reading
- Royal Assent

We will now explore these stages using our example, *Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* (Qld).

STUDENT ACTIVITY 3

Watch [this video](#) for an overview of how laws are made in Queensland, before we explain each step in more detail.



1 Presentation and first reading

I move—that the Bill be now read a first time.

When a Member of Parliament (MP) wants to make a new law, they first 'present' it. This means they table (or give) the Bill to the Parliament along with two other documents:

1. Explanatory Notes (which explain the reasons why the proposed law is needed) and a
2. Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights (which describes how the Bill may affect people's rights).

The MP explains the Bill so everyone in Parliament hears about the proposed law. The MP then requests the first reading. The Clerk reads out the Bill's short title. **Let's see this in action now.**

STUDENT ACTIVITY 4

Read the speech and answer the questions below:

The Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics and Paralympics Sport and Engagement):

'I present a Bill for an act to amend...the Emblems of Queensland Act 2005...I table the Bill and the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Economics and Governance Committee to consider the Bill.

I am pleased to introduce the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. As noted, this Bill will officially recognise the Muttaborrasaurus langdoni as our state's fossil emblem.' (Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023, p. 2711)

(As all speeches are recorded in written and audio-visual form, you can also watch this speech being made [here](#) by clicking the 'film camera' symbol).

1. Identify the name of the MP who presented the Bill.
2. Identify the name of the electorate they represent.
3. Identify the three documents the MP tabled in Parliament.
4. Explain the reason the new law is being proposed.

2 Committee consideration

After a Bill is presented, a parliamentary committee is asked to look into the proposed law.

A committee is a group of MPs who look at a new law more closely. The committee will read the Bill, discuss it, and consider how it will impact people. The committee also talks to experts about their opinions on the proposed law. Any Queenslanders (including you) can also let the committee know what they think. This feedback can be in written, audio, or video form and doesn't need to be very formal. This helps the committee understand if the new law is a good idea.



Image: A committee hearing, Queensland Parliament Collection, 2024.

STUDENT ACTIVITY 5

In Activity 4 you read that the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 was given to the Economics and Governance Committee to look at.

This committee had 6 members:

Mr Linus Power MP, Member for Logan (Chair)	Mr Ray Stevens MP, Member for Mermaid Beach (Deputy Chair)	Mr Michael Crandon MP, Member for Coomera	Mrs Melissa McMahon MP, Member for Macalister	Mr Dan Purdie MP, Member for Ninderry	Mr Adrian Tantari MP, Member for Hervey Bay

1. Using the Electoral Commission of Queensland 2020 results [web page](#), colour the boxes above each member's name to show which party they belong.
 - a. Colour Red—Australian Labor Party (State of Queensland) (ALP)
 - b. Colour Blue—Liberal National Party of Queensland (LNP)
 - c. Colour Pink—Other
2. Identify the number of government (ALP) and non-government (LNP and other) MPs were on the committee.
3. Explain why having a mixture of government and non-government MPs on a committee is beneficial. Infer whether having a varied group of MPs might be negative.

3 Committee report

After reviewing everything, the committee writes a report. This report tells Parliament whether the law should proceed to the next step. The committee can also suggest changes or improvements.

STUDENT ACTIVITY 6

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 be passed.

4

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Above is an extract (or a part) of the Committee report.

1. Identify what the committee recommended in their report.



4

Second reading

I move—that the Bill be now read a second time.

During this step, MPs discuss the proposed law. Sometimes, all MPs agree that the law is a good idea, and sometimes they disagree and talk about the Bill's benefits and limitations.

Let's examine what some MPs said during the second reading of the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

STUDENT ACTIVITY 7

Mr CRISAFULLI (Broadwater—LNP)(Leader of the Opposition): The opposition will be supporting this Bill...I note that the ACT, New South Wales, Western Australia, and South Australia already have fossil emblems. This is important for us as a state, ensuring our identity is represented and celebrated. The selection of a fossil emblem will aid in the promotion of Queensland as a palaeo tourism destination... (Record of Proceedings, 15 November 2023, p. 3568)

Mr TANTARI (Hervey Bay—ALP): Our state fossil emblem is a symbol of immense historical and cultural significance to the state of Queensland. This emblem is not just a representation of a geological past; it connects us to the enduring spirit of discovery and understanding that defines Queensland... Beyond its historical value, our state fossil emblem serves as a powerful educational tool. It inspires curiosity and learning, particularly among our younger generations... (Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2023, p. 3610)

Mr O'CONNOR (Bonney—LNP): The Muttaborrasaurus had the important support of the Maranoa regional, the Winton shire, the Barcardine shire, and the Flinders shire councils as well as David Elliott from Winton's Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum who said it is 'unique to Queensland', it 'represents our state on behalf of Australia' and that it is 'the right choice'. (Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2023, p. 3705)

Mr SMITH (Bundaberg—ALP): The story of the discovery of Muttaborrasaurus...is such a Queensland story. That is why the Muttaborrasaurus is such a fantastic emblem. It is about the Outback. It is about mustering. It is about weather and climates. (Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2023, p. 3617)

1. Identify which MPs agreed or disagreed that Queensland's fossil emblem should be the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni*.
2. Identify and explain the reason(s) each MP gave to support their opinion.

If the majority of MPs vote that the Bill should be read the second time, the short title is read again by the Clerk.

5 Consideration in detail

This step involves Parliament taking a very detailed look at every part of the Bill. Sometimes, MPs ask for a change to be made (called an amendment), which is discussed and voted on.

The Parliament agreed to include the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* as our state's fossil emblem in this Bill.

6 Third reading

The MP then requests that the Bill be read for a third time. The Clerk of the Parliament fulfills this request by reading the short title of the Bill. Following the third reading, the long title of the Bill is approved.

Why are there three readings?

When parliaments began creating laws, there were no printers, and some MPs couldn't read or write. Clerks would read everything aloud. As you discovered, the entire Bill isn't read—that would take too long as some Bills are hundreds of pages! Instead, only the title is read. Three reading stages allow MPs to understand, discuss, and improve a proposed law.

What is a short and long title?

The short title is the name we use when we refer to legislation, for example *Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* (Qld). The long title describes the purpose of the new law. This can quite long and difficult for people to say easily which is why you'll see the short title used more.



7 Royal Assent

The Clerk of the Parliament gives two copies of the Bill to the Governor, who represents the current King or Queen of the Commonwealth. The Governor then gives the Bill 'Royal Assent' by signing the Bill, which becomes an Act of Parliament.



STUDENT ACTIVITY 8

You can see what the Governor of Queensland does by looking at her program (or diary).

View the [Governor's Program](#) for 4 to 8 December 2023.

Identify the date the Governor gave this Bill Royal Assent: Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM granted Royal Assent to the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 on __ December 2023.

EXIT TICKET

Arrange the steps a Bill follows to become an Act in the correct order:

- Consideration-in-detail
- Presentation and first reading
- Committee consideration
- Second reading
- Royal Assent
- Third reading
- Committee report

Additional resources and links

- ABC News, [Outback Queensland dinosaurs in race to become state's fossil emblem](#) (with video)
- [Emblems of Queensland Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 \(Qld\)](#)
- Queensland Government, [Queensland's State fossil emblem—*Muttaburrasaurus langdoni*](#)
- Queensland Museum Network (Google Arts and Culture), [Muttaburrasaurus langdoni: One of the Most Complete Dinosaur Fossils in Australia](#)
- Queensland Parliament, [Factsheet: The Legislative Process – The Making of a Law \(simplified\)](#)

Why did the dinosaur take a bath?²

² To become ex-stinked!

The legislative process in Queensland

