



# ***ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr LP Power MP—Chair  
Mr MJ Crandon MP  
Mrs MF McMahon MP  
Mr A Tantari MP (virtual)

**Staff present:**

Ms L Manderson—Committee Secretary  
Ms M Salisbury—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023 AND INTO PREHISTORIC, DINOSAUR AND PALEO TOURISM IN OUTBACK QUEENSLAND**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Monday, 25 September 2023**

**Brisbane**

## MONDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

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### **The committee met at 3.00 pm.**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. I declare this public briefing open. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are participating in this meeting today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are extraordinarily fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuous living cultures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

My name is Linus Power. I am the member for Logan and the chair of the committee. The other members of the committee are Mr Adrian Tantari who is joining us via teleconference; Mr Michael Crandon MP, the member for Coomera; and Ms Melissa McMahon MP, the member for Macalister. Unfortunately, due to the timing of other conferences that are meeting, Mr Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach and the deputy chair is an apology, and Mr Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry is also an apology.

The purpose of today's briefing is to assist the committee with two inquiries. The first inquiry is the committee's examination of the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill was introduced into the parliament by the Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics and Paralympics Sport and Engagement on 14 September 2023, and the committee is required to report to the parliament on the bill by 27 October 2023. The committee, due to the passion on this issue and outback tourism in general, undertook to have a second inquiry into prehistoric, dinosaur and paleo tourism in Outback Queensland.

The briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. I remind committee members that officers are here today to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the relevant minister or left to debate on the floor of the House. These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please ensure any mobile phones are switched off or to silent mode.

**COLLINS, Ms Jessica, Assistant Director-General and Cabinet Secretary, Cabinet Office, Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**HANEL, Mrs Yasmahne, Director, Governance and Engagement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**KEESHAN, Ms Linda, Director, Cabinet Office, Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**MOLOMBY, Ms Kate, Acting Executive Director, Governance and Engagement, Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**SLATTERY, Mr Darcy, General Manager, Tourism, Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport**

**TIMPERLEY, Mr Andrew, Principal Policy Officer, Cabinet Office, Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**CHAIR:** I now welcome representatives from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and representatives from the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport. Good afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to brief the committee today. I invite you to brief the committee after which the committee members will have questions for you. We will commence with a briefing on the bill from our representatives from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and then hear from the Department of Tourism, innovation and Sport before we turn to questions.

**Ms Collins:** Thank you, Chair and committee, for having us. We are very pleased to be able to assist the Economics and Governance Committee in the course of its inquiries today. The policy objectives of the bill are to, firstly, officially recognise the *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* as Queensland's state fossil emblem and, secondly, to make a number of amendments to legislation relating to the Queensland parliament to improve and clarify certain parliamentary processes and procedures. Requests for many of the parliamentary related amendments have been made of the government by the Speaker, either in his role as Speaker or as chairperson of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, and were outlined to the Assembly in a statement made by the Speaker on 11 May 2023.

Starting with the Emblems of Queensland Act 2005, the proposed amendment introduces a state fossil emblem. The search for a fossil emblem began in response to a petition from the Winton community for the *Diamantinasaurus matildae* to become Queensland's official fossil emblem. In February 2021, the process commenced to identify potential fossil candidates for a state fossil emblem. This included consultation with regional and community stakeholders. From April 2022 to July 2022, Queenslanders were invited to have their say on the new state fossil emblem by nominating their favourite emblem from 12 short-listed candidates. *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* was the popular choice.

Turning now to the parliamentary related amendments, the bill firstly amends the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 to retrospectively clarify that since 23 April 1998 members of the parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee and its predecessor committees have been able to participate in committee meetings in person or by telephone, video or other electronic means.

The bill also amends the Parliamentary Service Act 1988 to clarify that the parliamentary precinct includes the Legislative Assembly chamber and its galleries when the Legislative Assembly is sitting, to ensure evidence is able to be given in a prosecution against a person accused of behaviour contrary to the by-laws regulating behaviour on the parliamentary precinct issued by the Speaker, and provide that the Speaker is to prepare the human rights certificate and explanatory notes for by-laws and rules made by the Speaker under the Parliamentary Service Act.

Finally, the bill amends the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to refine the process by which a member of the Legislative Assembly in a state of ill health has their request for a proxy vote notified to the Assembly, to retrospectively clarify that from 23 April 1998 to 22 April 2020, members of parliamentary committees established under the Parliament of Queensland Act have been able to participate in committee meetings in person or by telephone, video or other electronic means and update a number of cross-references in the act to definitions that are explained and provided for in the Electoral Act 1992. All of these parliamentary related amendments have either been recommended to the government by the Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament or have the support of the Speaker and the Clerk. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I turn to Mr Slattery.

**Mr Slattery:** I thank the Economics and Governance Committee for giving the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport the opportunity to speak in relation to these inquiries today, particularly in relation to prehistoric, dinosaur and paleo tourism in Outback Queensland. In November 2022, the Queensland government released, in partnership with the tourism industry, *Towards Tourism 2032*, the state's tourism strategy that sets the direction of tourism in Queensland for the next 10 years. In terms of tourism supply, success in 2032 is defined by Queensland being a global leader of vibrant, authentic, accessible and transformative visitor experiences and events, reflecting our natural and cultural values, vibrant communities and regions, catering for different types of visitors and delivering on our brand promise.

The introduction of a state fossil emblem for Queensland and leveraging the new emblem to grow paleo tourism is an action in the first phase of the strategy's implementation plan. Dinosaur or paleo tourism experiences in Outback Queensland form an important part of the breadth of experiences visitors can enjoy. Dinosaur tourism is a hero experience for Queensland and is part of the Queensland story and represents where our competitive advantage lies. I am happy to provide an update to the committee on work to date by the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, in partnership with the tourism industry, to grow dinosaur tourism in Queensland. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Normally I would turn to my erstwhile deputy chair, but standing in for him today is Mr Michael Crandon, the member for Coomera.

**Mr CRANDON:** In relation to the geographic location of members as far as their capacity to be in meetings is concerned, is there any restriction on that? I seem to recall several years ago that this committee was going to a conference in the Northern Territory and we needed to have a meeting. It turned out that we could not have that meeting if the chair was not in Queensland. So the chair stayed

back, the rest of us went and had a wonderful time in Alice Springs and met with colleagues from right around Australia and New Zealand. There was a limitation as to where the chair needed to be, if I recall correctly. I may have mixed that up a bit. Is there any restriction?

**Ms Collins:** Not that we are aware of. I am happy to take that on notice and have a chat to the Clerk to find out, but as far as we know there is no restriction on where you can be in order to use video or teleconference means to come into your committee?

**Mr CRANDON:** So you can even be overseas?

**Ms Collins:** I think so.

**Mr CRANDON:** The specific memory I have related to the chair of the committee. Could you look into that for me? The other question I have is: did the Muttaborrasaurus win by a nose?

**Ms Collins:** I think that is in the briefing paper.

**CHAIR:** I think we are getting it for the record.

**Mr CRANDON:** For the record, what did the Muttaborrasaurus win by? Did you say there were eight or 10 candidates?

**CHAIR:** Twelve.

**Mr CRANDON:** Crikey! I must have dozed off while you were saying that bit.

**Mrs Hanel:** There were 12 that were short-listed that went out for public consultation. I believe it got approximately 28 per cent of the public vote.

**Mr CRANDON:** The Muttaborrasaurus did?

**Mrs Hanel:** Yes.

**Mr CRANDON:** Then the others were divided. Was there quite a difference?

**CHAIR:** Was it 2,409 votes out of almost 9,000 cast? Are those numbers correct?

**Mrs Hanel:** I only have the percentage here in front of me—27 per cent.

**Mr CRANDON:** Thank you very much.

**Mr TANTARI:** I am interested to know, being a first-term member, if you are able to tell the committee about the introduction of other emblems other than the fossil emblem—in particular, my electorate backs onto an aquatic area—such as a state gem and an aquatic emblem, including efforts to leverage their establishment and the impacts they have had on tourism and relevant local economies by establishing these emblems. What impacts do you know they have had on tourism and relevant local economies?

**Ms Molomby:** In terms of the introduction of other state emblems, they have been in the act for quite some time now. I think the last one was introduced in 2005. In regards to the impact that that has had on tourism, I will turn to our tourism colleagues.

**Mr Slattery:** In terms of the impact of specific emblems, I do not have that information on me at the moment, but I am happy to take it on notice. In terms of the responsibility for research and conducting research and analysis of tourism in Queensland, Tourism and Events Queensland, which is the statutory body which also leads our marketing and promotion of Queensland to the world, is also responsible for conducting that research. They are probably best placed to answer those queries.

**CHAIR:** I think the member for Hervey Bay is making a play for the mammalian aquatic emblem.

**Mr TANTARI:** Pardon my ignorance, and I probably should know, but what is the aquatic emblem of Queensland?

**Ms Molomby:** The aquatic emblem of Queensland, which is also prescribed in schedule 4 of the act, is the Barrier Reef anemone fish.

**Mr TANTARI:** The what, sorry?

**CHAIR:** Anemonefish.

**Mrs McMAHON:** The clownfish, Adrian.

**Mr TANTARI:** I know what you are talking about. I did not quite hear that. That is interesting.

**CHAIR:** I do not know if we can revisit it in this committee hearing, but we do note, for tourism purposes, that the whales of Hervey Bay are great to visit.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Staying with tourism and dinosaurs, could you tell me if there are any other states in Australia that also have a fossil emblem?

**Mr Slattery:** Yes, I believe New South Wales, Victoria—a few others.

**Mrs Hanel:** I can add South Australia, Western Australia and I believe ACT—it has not been adopted yet; it is in the process of being adopted.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Is there any comparison in relation to those states that have paleo tourism or dinosaur-based tourism and what it means for each of those states?

**Mr Slattery:** I think in terms of their competitive advantage you would look to South Australia that has made some discoveries and are trying to establish a paleo tourism, dinosaur tourism market for themselves. In terms of our competitive advantage, the outback represents quite a number of different regions and we have a number of different tourism attractions that are specifically about dinosaurs that give us that competitive advantage to build a nice strategy and road map around.

**Mrs McMAHON:** If I could cast our minds back to 2020 when our domestic tourism was really our only go-to here in Queensland, and I understand that Outback Queensland was inundated and we saw a big tourism boom locally, I was wondering if you have any figures for since 2020 what it looks like in terms of things like occupancy and attendance at our dinosaur-related attractions. Basically, have we been able to keep up that sustained demand? I understand we have had the Year of Outback Tourism and I understand that there are still a number of programs and grants available in that space. What are we looking at in terms of hopefully an upwards trajectory in that specific space in tourism given that it is one that some of our eastern state competitors do not really have a lead in? Is there any idea?

**Mr Slattery:** In the year ending March 2023, Outback Queensland's domestic overnight visitor expenditure reached a record \$865 million. That is up 8.8 per cent on average over the past three years. That is data from Tourism Research Australia within Austrade. With just over one million visitors over this period, Outback Queensland's share of Queensland's total visitors is similar to that of Townsville and slightly more than some other regions like the Whitsundays as well. As noted by the minister, I believe in his introduction speech, Queensland's dinosaur tourism attractions account for an estimated 11 per cent of all tourism, almost 122,000 visitors, and 26 per cent of leisure tourism visitors to the Outback Queensland region. Strong visitation to dinosaur tourism attractions have been recorded since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for the family market. This trend is expected to continue. This level of visitation contributes to the broader tourism and economic activity across regions. Beyond economic value, dinosaur tourism also helps to tell the unique story of Queensland's communities and plays a role in the management and conservation of their heritage.

**CHAIR:** That is extraordinarily positive news and we want to keep growing that, but we heard information that it was not quite as positive around international visitors. It is a relatively new market. We have had COVID. Could you give us some information about the relative breakdown of domestic versus international tourism and we might have some follow-up questions on that?

**Mr Slattery:** In terms of international recovery, we do not have the numbers yet from a post-COVID perspective. We know that the outback offering does present some challenges for the international market in terms of access and accommodation—access from road, rail and air and accommodation in terms of the quality of accommodation that particular segments of the international market may be looking for. Through the Year of Outback Tourism in 2019 we did see visitation grow. I do not have the particular numbers from that period in terms of international visitors, but it is definitely, as mentioned before, a competitive advantage for us. We know that Outback Queensland will also be competing against other countries' dinosaur tourism offerings as well. There is a piece of work that is being led by Tourism and Events Queensland in consultation with the dinosaur tourism attractions that we have in the outback as well to identify what the strategy is moving forward for that.

**CHAIR:** For international visitors, the way I imagine it, it would be something that is unique. You can go to somewhere like Sydney and it is a fantastic world city, but it is a world city. You could see a similar thing somewhere else. Whereas, this is something unique if someone is more adventurous and wants an Australian experience. Is it on the radar of international visitors? How do they learn about it? What is the process? Have we done surveys on those international visitors who are going out there and things like that?

**Mr Slattery:** Again Tourism and Events Queensland is the responsible agency for research and analysis into that information, but in terms of understanding what our international travellers are looking for, we are unique as a state in that we have a number of different experience offerings, and outback paleo tourism, dinosaur tourism, is one of those. Again, Tourism and Events Queensland is

probably best placed to talk a little more about this. A few years back we did have a mission where we took some dinosaur tourism operators overseas to have a look at other countries' operations in terms of how they are drawing crowds, particularly in North America.

**CHAIR:** I noticed you used the phrase 'look to South Australia'. I just want to say it is the first time we have heard that presented to this committee. Overseas are there areas where it is significant and what kind of numbers are there and what kinds of things do they offer that are different from what we are offering here in Queensland?

**Mr Slattery:** I would have to take that one on notice unfortunately. I think the North American offering is the one that we have looked at in terms of being high performing. I am not sure exactly what those numbers are, but we could probably take that on notice and get that for you.

**CHAIR:** I have rather dominated a little bit. Member for Coomera, do you have a question?

**Mr CRANDON:** I do, thank you. I have a couple of questions. An observation first: the fact that you told us that there were dinosaurs in the ACT came as no surprise to us. I had to put that in. Following on from the chair's question about the North American experience, could you, in coming back to us, give us an indication of whether or not in North America, where the RV industry is massive, people are on the road all the time—I was over there a few months ago and you are dodging RVs every five minutes—it is a domestic interest or whether they are attracting people from other countries? On that, from a Queensland perspective is there a focused area that we could promote that would then perhaps turn into a trail for international visitors? I am concerned about bringing international visitors to Queensland and trying to get them out there. It is a big place and once we have them out there what is the accommodation like, all of those sorts of things. Getting them there in the first place is a challenge, I would imagine. Is there a particular area that we could perhaps focus on, not dissimilar to Uluru and the areas of accommodation that have been developed over the years out there?

**Mr Slattery:** In terms of current dinosaur tourism attractions, there are 10 across Outback Queensland, including in the towns of Muttaborra, Isisford, Eromanga, Boulia, Winton, Hughenden, Richmond and Mount Isa. We have the Australian Age of Dinosaurs in Winton, Kronosaurus Korner in Richmond, Flinders Discovery Centre and museum, Eromanga Natural History Museum, Riversleigh Fossil Discovery Centre and the Muttaborrasaurus Interpretation Centre as well. There would be an opportunity to build around those experiences that are already existing and performing as we have them currently in Outback Queensland but then looking at opportunities to connect that with the rest of the experience that is on offer in Outback Queensland as well. Looking towards opportunities to grow the regions and ideas around potential events or trails and those sorts of things I think is being explored by Tourism and Events Queensland with that group of attractions.

**Mr CRANDON:** Which requires vehicular transport and driving from here to there to there. There are some challenges, are there not?

**Mrs McMAHON:** You spoke about the difficulty with the international market and understanding that they are usually here for a very short period of time—they have very little time to spend travelling. This is where distance is our biggest enemy; making sure that we have direct flights into these particular outback hubs and then all the connecting transport, and you mentioned accommodation before as well. I understand from even a domestic tourism point of view accommodation can be at a premium during the peak tourism seasons. What is there in terms of encouragement to address the accommodation issue when it comes to capacity, the diversity and then, as well as that, that quick and accessible transport? I understand with international tourists they like to get on a plane, get to a destination, have their experience and go to the next one because they are only here for a finite period. Is there anything in the works or anything that has been identified as the capacity builder in terms of infrastructure to realise that scenario?

**Mr Slattery:** I do not have any information about identifying future opportunities to build that capacity. It is definitely a challenge that we are seeing not only in the quality of accommodation, but also the bed numbers that would be required and looking at the way that people travel through to the outback, whether it be by rail, self-drive or fly. There are a few different accommodation challenges there. To your point around shoulder seasons, and knowing that we do have capacity constraints within our current tourism portfolio, an opportunity that exists is presenting the shoulder season as a good time to travel to Outback Queensland as well. That will flatten the curve a little in terms of those peak seasons. We look at events as well to try to drive that off-peak visitation to the regions so that we are flattening it out a bit.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Acknowledging the issue with the shoulder season is that it is, by definition, not the school holidays and that families with children are hamstrung by what is the school holidays. Schools are reluctant to have children out of school for such periods of time as it would take a family

to self-drive out, experience everything and drive back. I was wondering in terms of engagement with the education sector about seeing a visit to many of these locations as being a curriculum add-on in many respects; that we do not have principals and schools up in arms when families take the opportunity to travel in our own state and what should be good quality education visits where they can be theoretically undertaking some study whilst the family is exploring during the shoulder season.

**CHAIR:** Speaking for both of us with school-age children trying to book things for school holidays.

**Mr Slattery:** We do have a program that is run by Tourism and Events Queensland called the Outback Queensland Education Experience Program, which provides a subsidy of up to \$150 per student to reduce the costs of an excursion for schools located in that region. There is work being done with the Department of Education through Tourism and Events Queensland to build that kind of school excursion experience as well.

**Mrs McMAHON:** I was probably talking more about individual students. I know that none of the schools in my electorate could ever afford to go on an excursion to the Gold Coast, let alone to Outback Queensland. I was just looking at those individual families who find time to go as a family but it involves taking kids out of school. Is there some kind of curriculum value they could get in doing that activity as a value-add to their education? The one comment I always get from families is, 'I would love to go, but it's booked out during school holidays. My kids are in this grade and they can't afford to miss the two or three weeks of school it would take us to go and see all the sites.' I was just wondering whether that is something for the department to consider or build on, where a student can almost enrol in an individual course approved by Education Queensland at various different age groups and whether there is an opportunity to build on families and kids going outside peak school holiday seasons.

**Ms Collins:** That might be something we take away and talk to our Education Queensland colleagues about.

**Mr CRANDON:** Just following on about access, I recently saw the headline in the *Courier-Mail* 'Grab your Akubra and cowboy boots because the state government announced two-for-one train tickets to Outback Queensland this summer.' Do we have any data on how people get there other than by car? Are there regular coaches they can utilise to get to these sorts of venues? Can they utilise the trains that head west?

**CHAIR:** As someone who took the train from Barcaldine back to Brisbane—

**Mr CRANDON:** You did or I did?

**CHAIR:** I did.

**Mr CRANDON:** I did not think I did.

**CHAIR:** I did it with the kids and the family. It was a fantastic trip.

**Mr Slattery:** In terms of how visitors use different modes of transport, we would have to take that on notice for Tourism and Events Queensland to look into. In terms of the specific data around rail, that is for Transport and Main Roads.

**Mr CRANDON:** I understand that the train out to Longreach has sleepers. Over in North America they have deals where you cruise up the coast of Alaska and then hop on the train for a day and all those sorts of things. Are there opportunities here to tie things together like that? Has anybody broached that type of idea with you where you fly in, hop on the train out west—

**CHAIR:** The *Dinosaur Train*!

**Mr CRANDON:** Yes, the *Dinosaur Train*. Are you aware of any discussion around those sorts of things?

**CHAIR:** That might be something we need to investigate further with TEQ.

**Mr Slattery:** There is nothing I am aware of, but there might be an opportunity to think that through.

**Mr CRANDON:** We might ask some questions while we are out there.

**CHAIR:** Do you have any further questions, Mr Tantari?

**Mr TANTARI:** My call dropped out and I have only just been reconnected. This may have already been asked during the period I was disconnected. I noted that, given the interest in paleo tourism—dinosaur and prehistoric tourism—in Queensland a number of other towns and sites have become available. Has this question been asked as yet, Chair?

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mr TANTARI:** I will keep going then. The Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee has been formulated with regard to a notable site. I was wondering what other groups or committees may have been established to develop fossil sites in Queensland.

**Ms Molomby:** We might have to take that one on notice.

**CHAIR:** Are there any further questions?

**Mrs McMAHON:** I have one question that is not dinosaur related. Going back to the amendments in relation to committee meetings and absences, during COVID I was on the PCCC and we had a lot of meetings online. We conducted inquiries online as part of the PCCC. During COVID we introduced a lot of legislation around other organisations such as incorporated associations being able to have their meetings online. I was wondering why, in that big tranche of legislation where we allowed every other committee in the country to meet online, we did not pick up on parliamentary committees.

**Ms Collins:** That is a very good question. It was an inadvertent oversight. It certainly was not a deliberate decision. It was done very quickly, as I understand it, and it was simply missed that this required an amendment to the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 after all the other committees had theirs set up.

**Mrs McMAHON:** So just confirming that the legislation is retrospective and everything is hunky-dory for all those meetings and inquiries we held in the PCCC during that time?

**Ms Collins:** It certainly does for the PCCC. We will also make all of the other committees retrospective through this legislation as well.

**CHAIR:** There being no further questions, we will bring these proceedings to a close. I note there were a number of questions taken on notice. Your responses will be required by 5 pm on Thursday, 28 September 2023. Thank you for the information you have provided today. Thank you to the Hansard reporters and broadcast staff—Lindsay up there—for their assistance. A transcript of the proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary webpage in due course. I declare this public briefing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 3.38 pm.**