

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 May 2021 9:21 AM
To: Economics and Governance Committee
Subject: Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 Inquiry Statement

Categories: Submissions

Dear Economics and Governance Committee,

As part of your current inquiry of the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 I provide the following submission in regards to further amendments to the Land Title Act 1994 to allow fee-free student access to historical resources.

The same submission was provided to the Minister for Resources on the 19th of April, 2021.

Please find the submission below:

My name is Lachlan, and I am a university student with a passion for history and researching land in Queensland.

I am writing to propose a change to a piece of legislation that would greatly assist students in performing historical land research.

As this particular piece of legislation is reviewed on a yearly basis, I hope you will consider what I have proposed below.

Name of Legislative Item:

Land Title Act 1994

Description of Proposed Change:

Currently, under Part 3, Division 1, Section 35 of the Land Title Act 1994, the charging of fees to search the register is mandated, with no exceptions aside from inter-departmental dealings.

It is proposed that fee free access to survey plans and title documents be given to secondary and tertiary students for strictly non-commercial research purposes.

Proposed Amendment:

Part 3, Division 1, Section 35 of the Land Title Act 1994 is amended to include the following statement as subsection (8):
"A person that is currently enrolled at a secondary or tertiary education institution may carry out a search, or obtain a copy, under this section without payment of the fee mentioned in subsection (1)"

Part 3, Division 1, Section 35 of the Land Title Act 1994 is amended to include the following statement as subsection (9):
"However, subsection (8) only applies if the registrar is reasonably satisfied the information obtained from the search or the copy will not be—

(a) used for a commercial purpose, including, for example, the marketing or sale of the information or other information; or
(b) provided to another person who is not currently enrolled at a secondary or tertiary education institution as part of a deal to circumvent the fee mentioned in subsection (1)"

Justification:

- Survey plans and title deeds are vital for tracing land ownership, identifying historical vegetation, and revealing past land-use activities - they cannot be replaced or substituted.
- The majority of survey plans, and title documents have already been scanned and are available in digital format - no physical effort is needed to retrieve them.
- Many properties now have multiple historical survey plans and titles, of which purchase at the current prices quickly amounts to a sum of money that is too large for most students.
- The cost to students of searching the register cannot be recovered if research is being conducted with no commercial intent.
- Fee free access will have little impact on revenue - according to the 2019-2020 annual report, Natural Resources Management only collected \$52,120 in user charges and fees in 2020, of which only a small part would have been contributed by students purchasing copies of survey plans and title documents.
- The current fees are preventing detailed and widespread analysis and investigation of an important aspect of the history of Queensland.

- New South Wales Land Registry Services makes historical survey plans and title deeds available for free via their Historical Land Records Viewer found at <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>

Overall, the provision of fee free access to survey plans and title documents to students would be a worthwhile endeavour that would be easy to do, have very little negative economic impact, and would allow for a richer and more interesting analysis of the history of Queensland.

Kind regards,
Lachlan Jones