



**AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES  
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Issued: 13 June 2014**

**Chair: Ian Rickuss MP**

Parliament House Brisbane

## **Parliamentary committee examines laws to boost home ownership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

A parliamentary committee wants to hear from people about laws that would give Queensland's 34 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the choice to have freehold title over their land and homes to encourage home ownership.

The laws are contained in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land (Providing Freehold) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 introduced to the Queensland Parliament by the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Andrew Cripps MP on 8 May 2014.

If passed, the Bill would give Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the option to convert township land currently held as 'deed in trust' land into individual 'freehold' title land. This change would allow people living in these communities the chance to own their homes and develop businesses.

Committee Chair, Ian Rickuss MP, said that the Bill would offer many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people their first real opportunity to own their own homes on traditional lands and to generate wealth through home ownership.

"The home ownership rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people living in the state's Indigenous communities is 5% compared to nearly 65% for the rest of the state. In Yarrabah, only 8.3% of households own their home. In communities such as Woorabinda and Aurukun, the rate is below 2%."

Under the Bill, trustees must talk to their communities before deciding about making freehold available. The Bill also sets out a process for how freehold land would be allocated to eligible interest holders, which initially would only include Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, their spouses, former spouses or widows.

Mr Rickuss urged people who may be affected by the Bill to get involved in the committee's inquiry.

"Moving to freehold will bring freedoms and benefits compared to renting, but it also brings costs and responsibilities. People should be asking questions now and finding out about how this Bill will affect them." Mr Rickuss said. "In the end freehold may not suit every community and everyone. The importance of this Bill is that it will give all communities the choice to move to freeholding if they want to go down that path or not."

"The committee is keen to hear from everyone who has views on this legislation."

The committee will hold public forums and hearings in Cairns and Yarrabah on **Wednesday 18 June**. Individuals and interested groups are invited to attend the Cairns and Yarrabah forums to hear about the proposed changes and to share their views on the Bill at these forums.

Additional forums are planned for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in July. The committee is required to report back to Parliament on the Bill by 11 August 2014.

#### CAIRNS PUBLIC FORUM AND HEARING

<b>WHEN</b>	Wednesday 18 June 2014 10.30 am – 12.00 midday
<b>WHERE</b>	Cairns Colonial Club Resort 18-26 Cannon Street, Cairns

#### YARRABAH PUBLIC FORUM AND HEARING

<b>WHEN</b>	Wednesday 18 June 2014 2.00PM – 3.30PM
<b>WHERE</b>	Yarrabah Leisure Centre and Community Hall Lot 57, Back Beach Road, Yarrabah

Links to the Bill and the Explanatory Notes are available from the committee's website:

[www.parliament.qld.gov.au/arec](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/arec)

	<b>Owned</b>	<b>Rented</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Local Government Area</b>			
	%	%	%
Aurukun (S)	1.3	97.3	1.3
Cherbourg (S)	0.0	100.0	0.0
Doomadgee (S)	9.9	86.9	3.3
Hope Vale (S)	2.6	96.1	1.3
Kowanyama (S)	0.0	100.0	0.0
Lockhart River (S)	0.0	97.3	2.7
Mapoon (S)	4.1	87.8	8.1
Mornington (S)	1.2	94.0	4.8
Napranum (S)	0.0	100.0	0.0
Northern Peninsula Area (R)	2.7	94.1	3.2
Palm Island (S)	4.4	92.8	2.8
Pormpuraaw (S)	0.0	100.0	0.0
Torres (S)	13.9	77.5	8.6
Torres Strait Island (R)	5.3	90.8	3.9
Woorabinda (S)	1.3	95.6	3.1
Wujal Wujal (S)	0.0	100.0	0.0
Yarrabah (S)	8.3	87.9	3.8
<b>All Indigenous Communities</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>All Non-Indigenous Communities</b>	<b>63.7</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1380.0.55.010 - Perspectives on Regional Australia: Home Ownership in Local Government Areas, July 2013			

**For media comment:** please contact the Committee Chair, Ian Rickuss MP 0417 728 392  
**For further information:** please phone the committee's staff on 3406 7908 or 1800 504 022  
 email [arec@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:arec@parliament.qld.gov.au) or visit the [committee's website](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/arec).