



Speech by

**Hon. Jeff Seeney**


**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

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## **GASFIELDS COMMISSION BILL**

### **Introduction**

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to establish the Gasfields Commission. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Gasfields Commission Bill 2012 [[1713](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Gasfields Commission Bill 2012, explanatory notes [[1714](#)].

I am pleased to introduce the Gasfields Commission Bill 2012. I am introducing this bill today to finalise our government's election promise to establish a Queensland GasFields Commission and to provide it with appropriate powers to address community disaffection and the conflict between the agricultural industry and the resources industry. The Newman government has made a firm commitment to improve coexistence between those two important pillars of our economy, agriculture and mining. Establishing the GasFields Commission and providing it with those appropriate powers shows that the Queensland government is moving quickly to achieve better coexistence between onshore gas development and agriculture. We hope this will ensure that we get the best outcome from both of those important industries.

The commission itself has been hard at work since 1 July. This bill formalises its formation and provides it with the powers it requires to undertake the work that we believe it can do. Work already commenced includes conducting an audit of water related science and research activities on CSG; providing advice, guidance and direction on the draft CSG water management policy; undertaking analysis of key elements of the land access review related to improving coexistence; and significant engagement on ground with landholders and industry.

The bill establishes the GasFields Commission as an independent statutory body. It is not an arm of government. It is a stand-alone entity that can provide impartial direction, advice and recommendations to government and industry. The commission consists of the chairman and six commissioners, who will be tasked with setting the direction for the commission and working closely with rural landholders, regional communities and the onshore gas industry. The commission will review regulations and identify whether legislation needs to be changed. It will provide advice and recommendations to government and it will be a conduit for providing unbiased information to the community. Also, it will bring parties together to resolve issues, partner with other bodies to undertake research where an identified need exists and convene advisory panels as needed.

The GasFields Commission is not just an advisory body. It has the teeth it needs to get the job done. This bill is about ensuring that it has the appropriate powers. The commission can compel government agencies to provide advice and information. This will give the commission the ability to get the evidence it

needs to properly understand the issues and make informed recommendations about how coexistence can be improved.

The bill that I am introducing today requires government agencies to consult with the GasFields Commission when developing policy and legislation relevant to the onshore gas industry. That requirement in the bill will be supported by administrative arrangements that ensure that the commission has a say in shaping relevant policies and legislation.


Under the terms of this bill, the GasFields Commission will also have the power to compel information from landholders, gas companies and other entities such as contractors. I considered this advice from commissioners and agree that this power is required to ensure that all necessary evidence would be available for the commission to perform its functions. The compulsory disclosure of all information ensures that the commission will have a complete understanding of any contentious issue and the bill provides that a penalty will be imposed for failure to comply.

The bill that I introduce today also provides for the Gasfields Community Leaders Council, a group made up of senior leaders from agricultural and community groups, local and state government and the CSG industry. This group provides a wider community representation to the GasFields Commission and will ensure that the commissioners' ideas are calibrated and community priorities are met.

The bill that I introduce today is unique in that it has been built from the ground up. It was shaped by landholders, community groups and industries. It was shaped by 55 submissions that were received during community consultation earlier this year. The chairman of the GasFields Commission, John Cotter, and the other commissioners have carefully reviewed all of those submissions, which have provided feedback and input. They have advised me of the functions and powers that the commission needs to get the job done. This bill is a compilation of what the community said was needed to ensure that the GasFields Commission not only was set up but also had the powers necessary to do the job. I thank all of those community representatives for speaking strongly and helping to shape this new body and for their input into the bill that I introduce into the House today.

Delivering legislation to support the work of the GasFields Commission was in the government's six-month action plan for Queensland. Today, once again, we deliver on our promise. I commend the bill to the House.

### **First Reading**

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (2.36 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### **Referral to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee**

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Cunningham): Order! In accordance with standing order 133, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee.