




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (9.16 pm): I rise to support the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. I very much thank the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, the Hon. Andrew Cripps, for bringing this very important bill before the House. I also acknowledge the work of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee and its acting chair, Mr Bruce Young, the member for Keppel, for reviewing the bill. Firstly, I want to applaud our government for delivering the most substantial land reform measures in a generation—reforms that will improve lease security for landholders. For years this issue has been ignored by Labor and this reform is well overdue. Our government has listened and we are acting to help create a clearer future for Queensland agribusinesses and the families who run them. At this point I want to acknowledge Mr Mick Hewitt, who is in the public gallery. His great-uncle was a very honoured member of this House. Mick Hewitt brought some of the issues that we are tackling with this bill before me and very ably assisted the minister. I do appreciate his presence here in the gallery tonight.

Land tenure security is one of the most important issues facing farmers and graziers across our great state. It is also an issue which affects tourism operators, particularly those who rely on access to protected areas. This bill implements just the first phase of land tenure reforms and begins the reduction of red tape and regulatory burden on landholders, business and government. There are several other key aspects to the bill. However, today I want to focus on the land tenure reforms and how they will benefit lessees. Approximately 60 per cent of our great state is leasehold estate. This equates to approximately 6,500 term and perpetual leases used for agricultural, grazing or pastoral purposes and also includes about 60 offshore island tourism leases.

In my electorate of Nanango security of land tenure is a key issue. Many of the primary producers in my electorate have chosen to lease state land for grazing purposes, using this land as agistment blocks during dry times, as prime fattening country or a way to grow their cattle herd numbers. Lease blocks are part of our primary producers' business plans and many of them use leasehold land as a good way to grow their business without making that major freehold property purchase. However, when a primary producer is unsure of their land tenure security, they are less likely to invest in the property and can find it extremely difficult to plan for the future.

At this juncture, I might add that the situation is exactly the same for the banks. They would also find it extremely difficult to lend security on such unknown tenure. Under these important changes, certain rural leases will enjoy 60 years of rolling tenure, allowing property managers to make those long-term investment decisions and, with them, delivering greater negotiating power with their banks. The reforms will introduce a simpler renewal process and there will be no requirement to enter into a land management agreement at the time of the term rollover as well as no consideration of the most appropriate use and tenure of the land. Effectively, this change will reduce the assessment time from years to a matter of weeks. What a lovely amount of common sense brought into this legislation!

I thank the minister, because those opposite should have done this years ago. Instead, they just simply sat on their hands and did not do it.

Submissions to the committee's review by AgForce and also the Queensland Tourism Industry Council fully supported these reforms. It is also important to mention that there will be a simplification of the conversion of pastoral term leases to freehold title. The reforms remove an outdated requirement for a pastoral purpose term lease to convert to perpetual lease tenure prior to being able to convert to freehold title. This change removes an unnecessary regulatory burden on both the lessees and the government. It also reduces the conversion costs for term leases seeking to convert their tenure to freehold by removing the step of first upgrading the lease to a perpetual tenure.

I am extremely proud to stand in this House to give that short contribution to the debate on this important land reform. I am also very proud to see our government putting its full support behind our most important regional areas and our primary producers. As I have discussed in this House before, agriculture is one of the four pillars of our economy. It is one of the most important industries for our regions and for the whole of the state because not only do we have amazing young people wishing to enter this industry but also as a government we need to do what we can to make it easier for people to enter this vital and important industry. I fully support this bill.