




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LAND (PROVIDING
FREEHOLD) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (4.39 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the passage of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land (Providing Freehold) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is a landmark bill that delivers to Indigenous Queenslanders the opportunity to own their own home in their communities, freehold for the first time. I will let my colleagues talk in detail about the opportunities to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the same opportunities to secure freehold title that are available to all Queenslanders. I simply acknowledge the opportunities for homeownership and that finally real economic development is now available with the passing of this legislation. I highlight that the government will not be forcing any Indigenous Queenslanders to accept freehold title for their communities; it is simply empowering trustees, in consultation, to make that decision if they wish to do so. Freehold is voluntary and optional for those communities.

The bill provides a new tool that can be used to maintain public access to our wonderful beaches. The main reason that I am speaking to this legislation is to acknowledge the good work that has been done in this space. This government believes fundamentally that beaches belong to the people of Queensland. In weather events such as Cyclone Oswald, the surveyed beach access or esplanade can wash away and public access can be cut, such as happened at Rules Beach in the Burnett electorate. Importantly, this legislation contains provisions to correct the nonsense of beach-access red tape that existed under the Queensland Labor Party. Public access to beaches can be declared under the provisions in this bill. Under really important and significant provisions in the bill, the owner will retain ownership of the beach area and will also regain exclusive access to the entire lot if the beach re-establishes itself on the seaward side of that lot. Personally I am proud of the sensible, cooperative way that the minister and the staff have negotiated and delivered real solutions to a complex situation. The owner of the lot will not have public liability except where they have acted intentionally or recklessly to cause injury. Conditions can be imposed on public access to minimise any inconvenience to the lot owner. This bill means that the government can provide beach access for Queenslanders where it is being denied unreasonably.

I acknowledge local community supporters such as Dave Green; Paul Morgan; Roger, the owner of the Baffle Creek caravan park; John and Kerry Hovey, who own the Baffle Creek hardware store; Sue Robertson, the local real estate agent; and, of course, Robin Bridges. They are all key advocates and have worked to ensure that the anomaly was overturned. Special mention must go to local resident Tony Bridges, who worked tirelessly for his community on this issue in particular, but also on many other important issues. We started petitions in February 2013 after realising or encountering difficulties with the local council's ability to provide solutions. I finish with a quote from our local community, in recognition of the work that is being done for the community. It states—

So with Premier Campbell Newman and Minister Andrew Cripps decisive action, we have now had our access restored to at least the state owned parks on our beach, for the people who love the outdoors and the ocean, they have helped our economy, by bringing back the tourists to our region to go beach camping and four wheel driving, and fishing.

It is with pleasure that I support the passage of this legislation through the House.