



Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 7 September 2017

**LAND ACCESS OMBUDSMAN BILL; GASFIELDS COMMISSION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeester—ALP) (Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business) (8.37 pm): I rise to speak to the Gasfields Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee. For my contribution I will specifically speak to the amendments of the Biodiscovery Act 2004 contained within this bill.

The key objectives of these amendments are to encourage biodiscovery innovation and investment in Queensland by streamlining commercial dealings with entities undertaking biodiscovery. The Biodiscovery Act allows entities to collect and use native biological material from state land and waters for the purpose of biodiscovery. An example of biodiscovery is the collection of a native plant from state land to extract a compound to form the basis for development and commercialisation of a pharmaceutical product. One such biodiscovery project is the spinifex project.

The spinifex project is an innovative partnership between the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation, who represent the traditional owners of the upper Georgina River region near Camooweal, and the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology. Bringing together traditional knowledge, nanotechnology and spinifex—Australia's most extensive vegetation type—to create the products of the future, this project is designed to produce cellulose nanofibres for ongoing and future commercial trials.

Working together, Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation and the University of Queensland are proposing to build a clean, green, Queensland based biorefining industry. Within five years, it is predicted that these nanofibres will have been transferred into dozens of applications and be manufactured on a commercial scale for a number of key markets.

This project has the potential to deliver huge benefits to the local economy and create a new industry that can deliver broader economic returns for our state. However, the pace at which this can be developed with associated partners can be hampered by the current structure of the Biodiscovery Act. Currently, the Biodiscovery Act is structured so that every entity that uses native biological material along a commercial chain is required to have a benefit-sharing agreement with the state. This was originally intended to ensure that any potential benefits of biodiscovery are shared in a fair and equitable way between the state and biodiscovery entities; however, this structure does not always suit commercial arrangements. There can be many entities involved in a commercial chain, and requiring each one to have a contract with the state may be a disincentive to realising commercial opportunities.

This amendment responds to stakeholder feedback from the 2016 statutory review of the Biodiscovery Act, including concerns raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. It also responds to feedback obtained through the direct negotiation of benefit-sharing agreements with biodiscovery entities. As such, the bill amends the Biodiscovery Act to expand the contractual framework for biodiscovery by adding an alternative agreement option. The alternative agreement

option is called a subsequent use agreement. Under this agreement, other biodiscovery entities would be able to enter into subsequent use agreements with a party to a benefit-sharing agreement. This agreement would be subject to prescribed minimum terms being met.

These changes ensure that all entities along a commercial chain can operate with reduced regulatory burden under the Biodiscovery Act. This means less red tape for entities involved in development of innovative products using native biological material collected in Queensland. This will encourage job creation and innovation in scientific discovery while protecting the state's interests in native biological material.

The benefits for biodiscovery projects that this amendment provides, such as the spinifex project, have the potential to help deliver the benefits I have just outlined in a shorter time frame. A range of consequential amendments are also proposed to the Biodiscovery Act to deliver this new subsequent use agreement option. Biodiscovery is an exciting and innovative area of research that is regulated by the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation. I commend the bill to the House.