




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (8.42 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the cognate debate on the Land Access Ombudsman Bill and the Gasfields Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I rise as probably one of the few people in this House, if not the only one, who has had to sit down and negotiate a conduct and compensation agreement with a gas company, so I know how this works firsthand. That was back in the very early days of gas. As we all know, it began under the Bligh era and it came at landholders at 100 miles an hour. They were not ready for it. I know the trauma that I went through in negotiating that contract. I had to seek legal advice. A code and conduct agreement is as important as a title on your property. It is that important.

In those early days it is fair to say that it became a lawyer's picnic because landowners did not know how to negotiate their way through, they did not know the roadblocks and the hurdles and all the difficulties that come when your property is turned into a gas field. We saw small legal firms in country towns bought out by very large multinational legal firms, and that continues today.

One of the greatest things that happened in the term of the LNP government—and the member for Hinchinbrook alluded to it earlier—was the GasFields Commission which the member for Callide was largely responsible for putting together under the stewardship of John Cotter. I had quite a bit to do with that commission one way or another. The area that I had my property on was rich agricultural land, and it was of great concern how the gas industry could cooperate and live with prime agricultural land. That still has not happened. They still have not come on to the central downs. There is an awful lot of gas there. There has been a lot of cooperation between landowners and gas companies over recent times to negotiate how that is going to happen, and that happened because of the role of the GasFields Commission. There is no doubt about that. Their work cannot be underestimated. I notice that they are going to drop from six to three, but the role of the GasFields Commission is still vitally important.

In turning to the Land Access Ombudsman Bill, I notice there are a few clauses where the ombudsman can refer breaches to the government department. I think that is very important. There must be a reasonable attempt made before there is a reference to the ombudsman. I think it is important as well that both resource companies and landowners negotiate in good faith. That was part of the problem in the early days. There were so many myths and so much hysteria around what was going to happen to the land. The member for Glass House alluded to that when he talked about what has happened in New South Wales and Victoria. We are still hearing it down there. There are no facts in the debate down there anymore.

Another good thing that happened during our term in government was the establishment of the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment. We now have more knowledge and understanding of what is happening under the ground than we ever had before. That is to the benefit of not only gas companies but also irrigators, stock and domestic and everybody. There is so much work being done in that space. It is starting to answer some of those myths.

This state has stood up and the gas industry has developed in this state. In New South Wales and Victoria they have surrendered to the hysteria, and that is very unfortunate. We are hearing reports now that New South Wales and Victoria may be importing gas through their ports. What a nonsense! They are sitting on a wealth of gas and they do not have the courage to go forward.

The ombudsman has a right to refuse frivolous, vexatious or trivial complaints. That is relevant to what I just said about some of the myths and hysteria that we have seen over the years. If there is no agreement, they can proceed to the Land Court. That is important, because the Land Court has always been the last line of defence. It always needs to be maintained. We need the ability to refer matters to the Land Court.

I support this legislation. This is not the end of it. It never will be. This is such a complicated area. It will always be an evolving area, whether it be land access, water, compensation or make-good provisions. Make-good provisions are probably the one big issue that will continue to evolve for a long time as impacts either evolve or not evolve as badly as some people might determine. I support this legislation.