




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

---

Record of Proceedings, 26 March 2019

### **LAND, EXPLOSIVES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.42 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this bill, which will have an effect on my electorate in several regards. I also point out that this is another omnibus bill. Omnibus amendment bills are becoming very familiar under this government. This is of concern because it annoys Queenslanders and impacts on our lives and businesses when we are constantly having to adjust to a stream of amended laws and the new regulations they seem to produce. I am constantly receiving calls from my constituents anxiously trying to check that they are not breaking any new laws or regulations.

This omnibus bill amends 13 separate pieces of legislation. This makes it difficult for media to report the changes effectively, so they tend to just give it a miss. It also makes it difficult for members of the public to comprehend what changes are being made and to search for the changes to make sure they understand them. Omnibus bills should only be used for minor amendments and legislative 'housekeeping'. This is a substantive bill that provides reform on real issues such as explosives handling and safety, Indigenous economic development and native title issues, and the use of state land. At the very least it should not have been pushed to the bottom of the *Notice Paper* sitting week after sitting week.

I would particularly like to commend the amendment to the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Act which will allow the sale prices of social housing on Indigenous land to be set by agreement. This will be very important to my constituents in the town of Woorabinda. I hope it will be used to encourage private home ownership. In a town like Woorabinda, social housing has been the main housing model. This makes it very difficult to set a market in order to allow residents to participate in the benefits of home ownership.

The social housing model was adopted with the best of intentions but it has had the effect of excluding the whole community of Woorabinda from the benefits of home ownership. Home ownership confers social, emotional and financial benefits upon individuals. My constituents in Woorabinda should have that. It also creates the basis for the economic development of whole communities. This is why local governments in Gregory resist the fly-in fly-out model for resource workers.

Many people have just assumed that the native title legislation somehow resolves the home ownership problem. It does not. This is why the LNP legislated for freehold opportunities in Indigenous communities. This amendment takes on the problems in moving from the old social housing model and provides a common-sense solution and one that allows adaption to better suit each community's circumstances—which is very, very important.

I move on to discuss the amendments to the Explosives Act 1999. As the representative of a Bowen Basin electorate, I am highly aware of the need for safety around explosives including their storage, handling and transportation. Queensland accounts for a third of all of Australia's explosive use and the reason for this is the mining industry on which our prosperity rests. Explosives safety and security are critical to the resources industry and for the protection of the Queensland community.

As it stands, the Explosives Act is silent on security related matters and it is essential that explosives legislation is kept current with contemporary safety and security standards and that it meets community expectations. This bill will also bring Queensland into alignment with our southern states as part of a national harmonisation process to achieve national consistencies in explosives regulation.

This amendment has concerned some of my constituents because they feared it was responsible for difficulties in transporting gunpowder to far Western Queensland—which is very, very important. I was able to advise them that the legislation should actually make transportation easier as it must travel across two state borders to get to us. I thank Minister Lynham for his assistance in this regard. He has done a great job. It is very important for people in Winton in my electorate, because getting gunpowder is so important for our roo shooters out there in Winton. It is very important for them to be able to afford to conduct that business. It does two things: it provides employment for people in Winton and it helps with the biosecurity issues that we face in the small towns in Western Queensland. I thank the minister. He has taken a serious look at this and he is doing the right thing.

By harmonising the safety transport regulations, we are reducing red tape. However, I will continue to monitor the outcome of this bill as it is imperative that we continue to be able to transport black powder by road to Western Queensland. The ability to reload their own ammunition is vital for the viability of the western kangaroo harvesting industry. In Winton alone the value of the industry is approximately \$900,000 per annum in terms of the value of carcasses shipped out. This has been a significant source of income during this long and terrible drought—well over eight years. We may be getting some rain out in Western Queensland at the moment, but I assure members in this House that the drought is not over. This rain will not solve the problems we have with drought. Our kangaroo harvesting industry is very important for towns like Winton and Quilpie, which is in the member for Warrego's electorate. The member for Warrego has been a very vocal advocate for our roo shooters because they play an important part in keeping our economies going in Western Queensland.

I move on to the amendments to the Lands Act 1994. Many members may never have to assist a constituent over matters relating to the Lands Act 1994, but I would say that in Gregory and also in Warrego barely a week goes by when we are not assisting someone in relation to the Lands Act. The amendments will confer upgraded compliance powers on officers administering the Lands Act. I can instantly think of situations where these powers will help—for example, where trespassers ride dirt bikes on crown land, annoying residents and causing damage to the land itself. However, such instances have previously been dealt with very effectively by the Queensland Police Service and I question—like the Queensland Law Society—whether the bill actually confers too much power on departmental officers.

I am highly conscious of the wonderful job our public servants in the seat of Gregory do—be they transport officers, environmental officers, lands officers or mining compliance officers. These public servants are on the cutting edge every time we parliamentarians introduce a new reform or a new rule. We must remember that. When we introduce legislation into this place, it is the public servants who have to carry it out and we have to make sure they have the resources to do that.

It is these men and women who not only have to enforce the rules but have to do so in the community in which they and their family must live. We are talking about communities that are small. These people live in towns where they have to enforce these laws, but their children also go to school together or they play footy or rugby with the people in town. We have to be mindful when we make these rules that it does not affect the way they live in the community, because they are just as important in the community as anybody else.

I must admit I worry about this. I would not be the first to say that, if we keep expanding their jurisdiction, we must ensure they have the support needed to do their jobs safely. However, I also worry that this government seems careless about safeguarding people's rights and liberties. I will be watching the effect of this amendment carefully to see the real world impact on people's rights. It is ironic that we have just passed the Human Rights Bill yet today we are considering the ninth bill to come before the House in the past two years that actually chips away at the property and legal process rights of Queenslanders. Apart from the clear concerns attached to this trend, I worry that it creates a real and physical danger for public servants charged with administering these laws.

Finally, I would like to make some general comments in the context of changes to various petroleum, gas and mineral acts. These are technical changes and sensible changes. It could be argued that these industries need certainty more than most because of the long investment time lines and the global price cycles they operate within. These industries are pillars of the Queensland economy, so when we see that global mining companies are ranking Queensland behind other countries we must continue to support them.

I am almost out of time. I have probably skimmed over this, but this bill is of great interest to me. I have been reading the committee reports and also taking a strong interest in a lot that goes into this bill. I again thank the minister in regard to our roo shooters and for allowing the safe transport of that black powder. I think that is a common-sense approach. It might not seem a lot in Brisbane, but it is very important to get that powder out there and in a cheap way so we can continue to have roo shooters.