




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

BIODISCOVERY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.44 pm): As a member of the committee which recently took over responsibility for the environment portfolio, I rise briefly today to support the introduction of the cognate bills. It has been fantastic having the opportunity to get our heads around a whole new portfolio. I am sure I speak for you as well, Mr Deputy Speaker Weir, as a fellow member of the committee. It has been great to have the opportunity to have some hearings on the introduction of the Rehabilitation Commissioner.

The Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill honours the government's commitment to explore options related to the establishment of a Rehabilitation Commissioner. The bill delivers on this commitment by creating a statutory position of a Rehabilitation Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor in Council. This position will carry distinct functions under the act which are additional and complementary to the existing functions of the Department of Environment and Science.

The Rehabilitation Commissioner will be independent from the regulatory functions of DES and supported by a dedicated team. The commissioner will work collaboratively with the community and stakeholders, the resources sector, environmental and scientific groups, and DES to provide advice on best practice rehabilitation management practices and outcomes. This will include the development of reports on best practice rehabilitation and management of non-use management areas. The commissioner will raise awareness of rehabilitation matters; will be responsible for chairing relevant workshops and forums; and will monitor and report on rehabilitation performance and trends to the minister responsible for the EP Act.

An annual report from the Rehabilitation Commissioner will be tabled in parliament. This report will include details on the performance of the Rehabilitation Commissioner's functions. It is important to note that the creation of this position will not create additional regulatory burden for operators. Rather, it is about giving the community confidence that the conditions applied to mining operations reflect best practice and also that that information is equally available, easily available and freely available to all within the community.

As I mentioned, the commissioner will also have the ability to meet with stakeholders and educate them about best practice rehabilitation. This will create openness and transparency within the broader community about the expectations the commissioner has in current and future rehabilitation, and provide that information broadly. This is about ensuring that there are clear expectations for the community. I commend the bills to the House.