




Speech By
Adrian Tantari

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2023

EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.09 pm): I rise to speak on the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This bill enshrines the *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* as the state fossil emblem of Queensland. What a fine beast he or she was. Standing at around seven metres, Mutt was a magnificent specimen of the dinosaur era, muscular and powerful. With its distinct inflated bulbous snout, it is not the biggest of the dinosaurs but he or she looks as if it was built for speed—

An honourable member: They.

Mr TANTARI:—they, whatever it may be—and power. With that build, I have no doubt the Mutt would have definitely been chosen in the first 13 in the ‘country of origin Gondwana’ series alongside the diamantinasaurus, the australotitan and the rhoetosaurus to take on all comers. I reckon the Mutt probably would have played at five-eights or halfback, taking out its prey with precision not unlike the great JT. Unfortunately, history knows that they did not win their battle in the end as they were knocked over by a comet. It was a sad ending, but they lived well and did their best.

Our state fossil emblem is a symbol of immense historical and cultural significance to the state of Queensland. This emblem is not just a representation of a geological past; it connects us to the enduring spirit of discovery and understanding that defines Queensland. Queensland is a land renowned for its vibrant biodiversity and rich natural history. It has in its possession a treasure trove of ancient wonders preserved in stone. Our fossil emblem, the *muttaburrasaurus*, is a testament to this legacy and symbolises a journey through time offering a glimpse into a world millions of years old.

Fossils are nature’s time capsules. They tell stories of ancient ecosystems, extinct creatures and the transformative process of our earth. In Queensland these remnants of the past are particularly poignant. They speak to a time when vast prehistoric seas teemed with life and gargantuan creatures roamed our lands. Our state fossil emblem, the *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni*, was chosen from these relics in a process that included a public nomination which short-listed 12 fossil candidates from around Queensland and a subsequent public voting process in 2022 from which the *muttaburrasaurus* ultimately emerged as the people’s choice. It is a chapter that Queensland proudly owns, a part of our identity etched in the annals of geological time.

Beyond its historical value, our state fossil emblem serves as a powerful educational tool. It inspires curiosity and learning, particularly among our younger generations, but it has also instilled a sense of pride in a whole town. We on the Economics and Governance Committee saw that pride firsthand at the home of the state emblem in Muttaburra. For that community it is a symbol of their shared heritage, a point of pride that fosters a deep appreciation for their environment and a role in preserving it.

The Economics and Governance Committee of which I am a member travelled to Winton and Muttaburra to hold public hearings as part of our examination of this bill and the committee’s ongoing further inquiry into palaeo tourism in Outback Queensland. What we heard at the hearings we held in

both locations was very clear in its acknowledgement of the proposal to have the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* instilled as the state fossil emblem. During the hearings we heard from the Mayor of the Barcaldine Regional Council, Mr Sean Dillon. I will quote directly from *Hansard* because it is important the parliament goes to the people. He said—

It is truly special for any community to play host to the Queensland parliament, either in its entirety or through the extension of its committees. We very much thank each of the committee members, secretariat and Hansard for taking time out of their very busy schedules to ensure that this community's voice is heard directly from within the community. It is important, especially in relation to issues that deal with emblems and symbols. This is not just a symbolic gesture; it is a real gesture. Rather than just a flying visit to visit and formally record the submissions from within the community, the committee's visit is extremely valuable and shows the respect that you individually and collectively as a committee—and as the government and members of the opposition—have for the process.

With reference to the inquiry undertaken as part of a greater look into palaeo tourism, Mayor Dillon reflected on the nomination as the official Queensland emblem. He said—

Yesterday's inquiry was revealing.

That was the one we held in Winton the previous day. He went on—

It underlined the holistic support that rural and Outback Queensland and its tourism operators have for the establishment of a fossil emblem in Queensland.

Mayor Dillon further stated—

... I think I detected and received clear support for the proposition that the Muttaborrasaurus become the emblem in the fullness of time as the legislative process is completed. It is very important for this community.

In Muttaborra the Economics and Governance Committee was privileged to hold our hearing at the Muttaborra Memorial Hall, itself full of history, alongside the stunning and magnificent Muttaborra Interpretation Centre, home of the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni*. I highly recommend to members in this House and the community at large that, if the opportunity arises to go and view the exhibit and the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* in all its glory, they will not be disappointed.

During the Muttaborra hearing the Economics and Governance Committee also had the pleasure of speaking with Pearl Langdon, whose late husband, Doug Langdon, while mustering on his property, discovered the 100 million-year-old bones of the plant-eating muttaburrasaurus near the Thomson River. Mrs Langdon told how her late husband knew he had come across something that was unique and would say to her that it was the best thing he had ever done for Muttaborra. Doug's actions on the discovery of the fossil were to want the find to be cleaned up and displayed for everyone to see. Unfortunately, Doug passed before seeing the completion of the interpretation centre. Mrs Langdon also acknowledged the impact the find had on Muttaborra and Doug's efforts in getting the discovery known around the world, saying that people all around the world now recognise the uniqueness of the muttaburrasaurus. In her own words she said, 'It is just amazing how the muttaburrasaurus has gone around the world.'

I want to thank Pearl for keeping Doug's legacy going and working to ensure that this unique fossil that is known worldwide will now be, under legislation, our state fossil emblem. It is a tangible connection to the science of palaeontology, encouraging exploration and the understanding of our natural world. Queensland's state fossil emblem is a symbol of the rich diversity of life. Just as our state is home to a multitude of ecosystems and species, the emblem reflects the variety and adaptability of life over eons. It highlights the evolutionary journey that has led to the present day and reminds us of the delicate balance and interconnectivity of all living things. It reminds us that the wonders of the past can only be preserved through efforts in the present. It brings to light the critical importance of protecting our natural habitats and species. In understanding the past, we gain insights into the future, recognising the impact of our actions on the environment and the need for sustainable practices.

In conclusion, Queensland's state fossil emblem is more than just a symbol. It is a bridge connecting us to the ancient past, a reminder of our responsibility to the future. As we embrace legislative recognition of the muttaburrasaurus we will see it join the state's nine other unique official emblems including the Cooktown orchid, the koala, the Great Barrier Reef anemone fish, the brolga and the sapphire.

As the chair and the deputy chair mentioned in their speeches earlier in the debate, the recognition of the Mutt as our state fossil highlights the interest in our state in the growing palaeo tourism industry. As a member of the committee, I look forward to working with my committee colleagues to advance this industry in our great state. I would like to table a map that shows the level of discovery that has and is taking place across Queensland.

Tabled paper: Map of Queensland depicting key locations of fossil discoveries and potential regions for palaeo tourism [1904](#).

Looking at the map highlights how big the potential for this growing tourism industry is for rural and regional Queensland. It is just huge and we are in the box seat to reap the rewards for all Queenslanders.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the Economics and Governance Committee, particularly the chair, the member for Logan, and the deputy chair, the member for Mermaid Beach. I want to acknowledge that the deputy chair copped a fair bit of banter around dinosaurs generally from the committee but did so in good humour and spirit during our deliberations. You could not take the boy away from the outback; he was chuffed to be out there.

I would also like to commend the committee secretariat for their tireless work in organising for the committee to see the excellent exhibit of the state fossil emblem at its home in Muttaborra. I support the Mutt and the bill before the House.