




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.18 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I would like to thank the committee members from both sides of the House for their consideration of the bill and the submitters, of which there were four. The bill is an omnibus bill amending seven pieces of legislation. That is a few less pieces of legislation than the minister's predecessor amended in his former omnibus bills, and that is certainly a relief to stakeholders. However, the quality of the original explanatory notes was lacking in professionalism for this bill. There were significant errors. The relevant clause numbers did not correctly align with the clause being explained. The committee members and stakeholders were not then able to identify where information may have been omitted. Not only is it confusing for the committee members and the committee staff; it is time consuming for stakeholders when these mistakes occur—so much so that the committee recommended at its meeting on 4 May 2022 that the explanatory notes be corrected to meet the professional standards that Queenslanders would expect from government.

A major component of this bill is to amend the Stock Route Management Act. As a former deputy chair of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, I wish to make a few comments about the 2016 Stock Route Network Management Bill, which failed to pass the parliamentary committee processes.

This was one of the rare occasions when there was bipartisan rejection of a bill. The reform failed in 2016 not because it was reform but because the unintended consequences outweighed the achievements of the reform. The issues raised then were in relation to financial rigour, adequate consultation and transparency of being accompanied by draft regulations or a draft stock route management plan. It was also seriously lacking in many other areas. I distinctly recall local government after local government lining up at that time to reject the 2016 legislation. Very little support was expressed at that time for the stock route management reform throughout the submission process and also at the regional hearings. In 2016 I made it clear there was a need for reform of the stock route legislation. However, in the eyes of stakeholders the 2016 bill did not deliver for them.

The stock route network is valuable to many stakeholders in Queensland and the network's proper management is paramount to rural and regional Queensland and to many local governments. Since 2002 there has been government consultation, reports and draft legislation in relation to the stock route network. This reform has been in the wings for a long time. The reform needs to be done with good engagement from local government and other stakeholders.

There are 48 local governments in Queensland that contain parts of the stock route network within their local government area. Local governments hold substantial responsibility for the management of the network, including assessing and issuing permits, managing the land activities such as fire and weed management, and maintaining water facilities and other assets. Their staff are also very involved when it comes to travelling stock moving through their local government areas.

It should be noted that the use of the stock route network varies from local government to local government in Queensland. For instance, in the Boulia shire there are many stock routes that are not fenced and it would be impractical to fence them, yet they are used by local landholders and travelling stock. In the Maranoa Regional Council all of the stock routes are fenced. The stock routes are close to the Roma Saleyards and they are used to feed stock awaiting sale that may have travelled long distances to those saleyards. In other areas councils have travelling stock on their stock routes. We are seeing a change in climatic conditions and we hope they do not have too many stop on their stock routes in a short period of time. There are also camping and water reserves that are leased to adjoining landowners. The uses are varied and local governments are best placed to cater for the variances across the state.

The bill will enable local governments to charge an application fee and retain 100 per cent of the revenue from permit fees as a means of recouping some costs associated with managing the stock route network. In their submission the LGAQ estimated the cost to councils was approximately \$4.8 million per year to manage the stock route network. I think that figure is probably fairly conservative, too. As a result of the low price for travelling stock, the burden is on local governments as the fees do not cover the management and maintenance. Presently, ratepayers are substantially subsidising the operation of the stock route network and councils will need to work their way through any increases they make to those fees.

I also encourage local governments to look at public-private partnerships with local landholders to reduce the management and infrastructure costs on stock routes. That is something that I think has been overlooked in this information. If there is an adjoining landholder who is happy to maintain, for instance, a bore on a stock route and they can have a water-sharing agreement with the council and travelling stock, they will do a lot of that work for the council and it will save the councils a lot of additional expenditure. It helps keep down the labour costs. It actually helps ensure that the assets are well run and ready when travelling stock need to come through. If the councils can engage landholders in public-private partnerships they will find there is a win-win for everyone. I hope this legislation, given it will have greater local input, will encourage more partnerships of that nature, some of which already occur.

I think some very important points were made in the LGAQ submission. There were eight recommendations relevant to the future work that needs to be done with the Department of Resources and Queensland local governments. There is a body of work to do on mapping, and I stress the mapping must be accurate, ground-truthed and user friendly. We know of the difficulties experienced when mapping is inaccurate, and we have seen that play out with vegetation management mapping.

This reform to stock routes is needed. However, there is still more work to do. I will be keeping a watching brief and engaging with local governments as to how that reform continues and goes forward. I look forward to that. I support the bill.