




Speech By
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EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (12.29 pm): I rise to speak to the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and the deliberations of the Economics and Governance Committee of which I am a member. The bill proposes to legislate the state's first official fossil emblem in order to recognise that the prehistoric dinosaur and palaeo tourism industry is now an important contributor to the Outback Queensland economy and employment. As a result of public and stakeholder consultation in mid-2022, as we have heard other members elaborate on, the muttaburrasaurus dinosaur was chosen from 12 candidates to be the state's official fossil emblem, receiving 2,409 votes of the 9,000 that were cast. This dinosaur won the people's choice award, but it should be noted, on top of the previous member's contribution, that another awfully popular dinosaur originating from Richmond just missed out. This dinosaur, which is more often seen now on the Gold Coast around Mermaid Beach, is known as the 'Rayasaurus'. It was disappointing for some members of the committee that the 'Rayasaurus' was not awarded this prestigious distinction, but maybe in the future we might see a statue of the 'Rayasaurus' in Richmond where it originated. We can only hope.

Before I delve into the fascinating world of palaeo tourism, this omnibus bill also contains a range of minor amendments to improve and clarify parliamentary procedures. Acts amended include the Crime and Corruption Act 2001, the Parliamentary Service Act 1988 and the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The committee supports these amendments. Now back to dinosaurs.

The muttaburrasaurus, or big-nosed dinosaur, is the people's choice of fossil emblems and will join Queensland's nine other unique icons such as the Cooktown orchid, koala, Great Barrier Reef anemone fish, more commonly known as the clownfish thanks to *Finding Nemo*, the brolga and the sapphire as symbols of our great state, helping us tell and sell our Queensland story. Queensland will be the only state in Australia to have a dinosaur as its fossil emblem, fuelling the claim published in the Council of Australasian Museum Directors magazine in 2021 that museum operators believe Queensland's Outback is well on its way to becoming the dinosaur capital of the world. While this may sound like a big call, there is a growing chorus of enthusiasts and economists who are all singing from this song sheet.

In reference to the bill, the Economics and Governance Committee inquired into and reported on recent developments and initiatives to build prehistoric dinosaur and palaeo tourism in Queensland, the value of prehistoric dinosaur and palaeo tourism to the Outback Queensland economy and challenges and opportunities for the further development of the industry into the future. I would like to acknowledge my committee colleagues who travelled and conducted public hearings, forums and regional site visits in places like Winton and Muttaburra and in Brisbane where tourism organisations and palaeontologists were consulted. I would like to thank the Maranoa Regional Council, Eromanga Natural History Museum, Milynda Rogers and Dinosaur Experience Australia for their submissions to the committee's inquiry. Dino tourism, palaeo tourism, geo tourism, even ecotourism, are all different names for the same pursuit of answers to questions such as, 'Where did we come from?' and 'What came before us?'

Dinosaurs are massive, mysterious creatures and for many children they are the first introduction to the world of science. Unlike dragons in monster storybooks, children can actually go and see evidence of real dinosaurs in a museum.

What do we know about our iconic dinosaur, our new fossil emblem? The story goes like this. Doug Langdon discovered a dinosaur bone in October 1963 on the banks of the Thomson River near Muttaborra in Central Western Queensland. The bones were that of an herbivore that lived 100 million years ago and was later named the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni*. The muttaburrasaurus measured about seven to eight metres long—the length of two average cars. For those playing along at home and the dinosaur-mad students in my electorate of Ninderry, it was an ornithomimid dinosaur, which means bird footed, but it differed from other ornithomimids as it had an inflated, bulbous snout and a powerful bite with specialised shearing teeth. These teeth were used for eating plants such as seed ferns, ferns and conifers.

This was the start of many dinosaur discoveries across Western Queensland, and almost 60 years later a niche palaeo tourism industry is booming. The Muttaborrasaurus Interpretation Centre was opened to provide a shelter for a replica statue 'Dino' which has been in the town since 1993 and tells the story of how those prehistoric fossils were discovered. Our small towns have epic sized histories and have learnt that it is worth capitalising on these finds. Several museums have been built at or near the find sites themselves, turning towns into tourism destinations. These Outback hotspots attract up to 135,000 visitors a year, according to data from Tourism and Events Queensland, and account for 17.6 per cent of the state's gross regional product. The sector has grown from nothing to 10 tourism sites in just 12 years and now accounts for 11 per cent of all Queensland Outback visitors in the state. Analysis of the dinosaur economy, as it is referred to, has shown that visitors spend more than seven times what they normally do when it comes to dinosaurs because the kids want all the souvenirs, or merch as we refer to it, which simply means greater yields for those businesses previously struggling. This is great news for local economies which were once built on the sheep's back and are now built on the dinosaur's tail.

Queensland's world renowned Australian Dinosaur Trail is a perfect example of destination marketing. It embraces a triangle of Outback towns which include Winton, Richmond and Hughenden and is just 1,350 kilometres from Brisbane. This special region preserves a history of the shallowing seaway that once covered parts of inland Australia. These towns deserve their place on any palaeontology map because they are home to 98-million-year-old dinosaur bones. They also support evidence of a dinosaur stampede. They are home to the largest Australian fossil collection, as well as ancient marine reptiles. To top it all off, Eromanga, located 660 kilometres south, is home to Australia's largest dinosaur, as declared by the Eromanga Natural History Museum last year. Cooper, as the dinosaur is known, was found by Robyn Mackenzie and Quilpie shire mayor Stuart Mackenzie on their property near Cooper Creek in the Eromanga Basin in 2006. Cooper is 6.5 metres tall, 30 metres in length and weighs about 65 tonnes. That is longer than a basketball court and taller than a two-storey house. Dinosaurs of this size had rarely only been found in South America. Eromanga first shot to fame in 2004 when then 14-year-old Sandy Mackenzie spotted an unusual rock while mustering cattle on the family property. That unusual rock led to the discovery of gigantic fossils belonging to a group of giant dinosaurs called titanosaurs that lived between 93 million and 96 million years ago. Their discovery represented a new species of dinosaur for Australia.

These are the stories that make Outback Queensland unique. The value of prehistoric dinosaur and palaeo tourism to the Outback Queensland economy, according to a Tourism and Events Queensland 2022 report, is \$105 million, accounting for \$55.7 million in GRP and employing 612 FTEs. By 2036 dinosaur tourism is projected to be worth \$235 million, including \$126.3 million in GRP and employing 1,379 FTEs. The *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* state emblem recognises the rich fossil offerings already discovered in Queensland and the contribution that dinosaur and palaeo tourism makes to our Outback communities. This is a symbolic effort to promote tourism that supports local economies and showcases one of the points of difference that make Queensland a superior tourist destination.

Moving forward, it is important that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet liaise closely with stakeholders in determining and communicating the emblem design and in relation to the use and sharing of the emblem's image to best position stakeholders to take advantage of associated promotional and marketing opportunities and ensure they are appropriately supported in those endeavours. The committee also notes the calls for further investment in palaeo tourism to build on the establishment of the emblem and it will continue to explore key challenges and opportunities in this regard as part of its ongoing inquiry into prehistoric dinosaur and palaeo tourism in Outback Queensland. In the meantime, on behalf of the committee, I encourage Queenslanders to plan a visit to our Outback dinosaur destinations to walk in the footsteps of dinosaurs and learn more about our fossil emblem. I commend the bill to the House.