




Speech By
Jim Madden

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The bill was introduced to parliament by the Minister for Resources on 17 March 2022. If passed by parliament, the bill will amend or revoke about 14 acts or regulations. It is truly an omnibus bill, but I will focus my contribution on the sections dealing with changes to legislation relating to conversion of perpetual or term crown grazing leases and the local government management of stock routes.

The purpose of the bill as set out in the explanatory notes is to ensure the regulatory frameworks within the resources portfolio remain efficient, effective and responsive to change. The bill provides a range of streamlining, minor and miscellaneous amendments to legislation and regulations, which clarify policy intent and reduce complexity. The minister nominated the Transport and Resources Committee to consider the bill, with the committee required to report to parliament by 6 May 2022. In its report, which was tabled in May 2022, the committee made three recommendations: firstly, that the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 be passed; secondly, that the minister revisit the proposed amendment to certify the regulation vegetation status rather than this being included in the Vegetation Management Regulation; and, thirdly, that the minister table a corrected version of the explanatory notes as a matter of priority and ensure that the electronic version of the document is the same as the tabled document.

On 21 March 2022 the committee invited stakeholders and subscribers to make submissions on the bill. Four submissions were received. The committee had a public briefing about the bill from the Department of Resources on 1 April 2022. The committee received written advice from the department in response to matters raised in the submissions. The committee held a further public hearing on 8 April 2022.

The bill will amend the Land Act 1994 and the Land Regulation 2022 which will enable the chief executive to make an offer to convert a perpetual Crown grazing lease, or a term lease, to freehold or a perpetual lease. For those unfamiliar with grazing tenure in Queensland, Crown leasehold land—that is, perpetual or term lease—makes up about 66 per cent of the Queensland land mass. Owners of leasehold properties are required to pay an annual rent to the state government, despite having already purchased their properties. However, a leaseholder can apply to the government at any time during its term with an appropriate fee payable to convert their perpetual or term lease to freehold.

As detailed in the explanatory notes, the amendments proposed by the bill will enable the chief executive to proactively manage the leasehold land estate by providing an alternative pathway for initiating conversion from leasehold to freehold. The chief executive will be able to proactively seek the conversion of leases where freehold is of an appropriate tenure or where the perpetual lease is the most appropriate tenure in certain term cases, in accordance with the objectives of the Land Act 1994. The department advised the committee that eligible leases are those for which there is no underlying tenure or interest in the land that is incompatible with freehold tenure, and when there is no public purpose associated with retaining state ownership of those tenures. Freeholding such land aims to

provide greater tenure security to support business development and growth, which is critical to contribute to Queensland's economic prosperity. The amendment will basically allow the chief executive to proactively offer the opportunity for freehold to a tenure holder. They will not be obligated to accept the offer, and, if they do not, tenure continues as it is now.

In its submission, AgForce advised the committee that, while it is supportive of the introduction of an alternative, more efficient pathway to initiate lease conversion, it considered that term lease tenures require further attention. AgForce advised—

With most perpetual leases transitioning to freeholding, it is the term lease tenure that requires further attention if the State is to encourage continued good management, as well as the viability of the tenure, industry and its surrounding rural communities and to continue the good work that was legislated in 2014. Over the years, AgForce has advocated for reform and discussion for alternative tenure models to be implemented which address both the needs of traditional owners to have connection to country and lessees to exit the rent trap. AgForce believes that the state government should consider the implementation of a further tenure conversion program aimed at improving tenure security for term leases. As a preference, this would see the conversion of all leases to freehold or at the very least the conversion of term leases to perpetual.

In relation to term lease tenure, AgForce advised the committee that they would like to see a high-level statement that provides for a structured and considered pathway that allows for discussions about, at times, some vexed issues and provides for some certainty about the process which could take some time.

Another important aspect of the bill is the proposed changes to the Stock Route Management Act 2002. Queensland stock routes comprise about 72,000 kilometres of roads, reserves and corridors on pastoral leases and unallocated land. In total, they make up 2.6 million hectares of land. They are not just used for moving stock—otherwise known as droving—but are also used for grazing of stock and providing water for stock in times of drought.

As detailed in the explanatory notes, the bill will amend the Stock Route Management Act so the local government can retain permit fees and other charges collected by them. This is to improve cost recovery for local governments arising from the management of the stock route network. As well, local government can charge an application fee—that is, the amount prescribed when the Stock Route Management Regulation is amended—to cover some of the administrative costs arising from managing access to the network, while giving local government the flexibility to waive these fees in cases of hardship, for example in times of drought.

The bill also provides that the Minister for Resources no longer needs to consider a local government's draft stock route network management plan and the local government no longer needs to establish working groups to advise on preparing such plans. As well, the bill provides that the processes for updating and publishing the stock route network map utilise contemporary technologies and reflect local circumstances and community input. With reviews of the local government stock route network management plans, the local government is required to consult with state agencies where stock routes are co-located on or next to state controlled roads, waterways and protected areas to minimise risks to road safety, transport infrastructure, park management and biodiversity. I am sure these changes to the Stock Route Management Act 2022 will be welcomed by local governments who are currently required to manage stock routes, the drovers who use them and the graziers whose stock is moved along this vast network of stock routes or use these stock routes for grazing in times of drought, in what is sometimes called the long paddock.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Transport and Resources Committee. At the time the bill was reviewed, the committee comprised: the chair, Mr Shane King MP, member for Kurwongbah; the deputy chair, Mr Lachlan Millar MP, member for Gregory; Mr James Martin MP, member for Stretton; Mr Les Walker MP, member for Mundingburra; Mr Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North; Mr Pat Weir MP, member for Condamine, whom I see in the chamber tonight—although he was only a member of the committee from 31 March 2022; and Mr Colin Boyce MP, member for Callide, who was a member of the committee up until 29 March 2022.

As well, I would like to thank the secretariat, Hansard, the submitters and the members of the Department of Resources who assisted the committee. I am delighted to commend the bill to the House.