




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.45 pm): Last night, I saw members of the Indian community celebrating Diwali with the Premier. On the way out, they took the time to take photos in front of the great Queensland coat of arms that is in the Annexe—the very coat of arms that is above your head, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was reminded that emblems really matter. The symbols that we adopt as a state tell us something about us. That is why when it comes to our state fossil emblem, I am extraordinarily proud, together with the entire committee, to endorse the choice of the muttaburrasaurus.

We are rightfully proud of the 60,000 years or so of human habitation of Queensland and the living continuing cultures that add so much to our state. We should also recognise our extraordinary much longer history. Just think, over 100 million years ago, our state was much more temperate. The great Eromanga Sea and swamps covered the state, from the gulf to beyond the New South Wales and South Australian borders. Through these ancient forests and swamps lived an extraordinary herbaceous ornithopod dinosaur. From tip to tail the beast was about eight metres long and weighed nearly 3,000 kilograms. The femur bone alone was over a metre long. It roamed the banks of this great sea, eating temperate plants such as ferns, cycads and conifers with its rows of grinding teeth.

Though our history of 100 million years ago is incredible, I want to focus on the events that occurred years later. This is a story of serendipity, of perseverance, of fording rivers and of discovery. It is worthy of a movie and it is a lasting legacy to an extraordinary family, a pioneering town and, of course, our state.

As the committee drove down the road between Winton and Muttaburra, each of us was searching for yet another dinosaur find. I was also thinking of the discoverer of the muttaburrasaurus, Doug Langdon. Unfortunately, I never met Doug, but by all accounts he was an extraordinary Queenslanders. Doug served our country in not one but two wars. When he returned home to his wife, Pearl, on the farm he must have heard something about fossils in the area. In December 1962 he was out mustering. His wife, Pearl Langdon, told us at the hearing that when he first saw the formation on the ground he was riding off. He went a bit further and it got the better of him and he said, 'No, I am going to go back and have a look.' He got off his pony—this time—and he had a look and brought a piece back home. Pearl told us he said, 'I have found a dinosaur,' and he showed her a piece of what looked like a rock. Pearl said, 'It looked like a rock or stone to me' but he said her, 'Don't drop it, we'll send it down to the museum in Brisbane.'

To adapt the words of Banjo Paterson, who wrote poems in nearby Winton—

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Doug Langdon,
Gone a-droving "down the Thompson" where the Western drovers go;
As the stock are slowly stringing ...

I imagine him packing that strange stone in his saddlebags returning to the herd. Further, I imagine him and Pearl wrapping it on the kitchen table in old copies of the *Western Champion* and carefully placing it on the train at Barcaldine to rattle down to Brisbane addressed 'Just "on spec" to Dr Alan Bartholomai of the Queensland Museum'.

I can imagine Dr Bartholomai unwrapping this strange western treasure in the back rooms of the old museum near the Ekka—the museum that we remember and loved as kids. He wrote back saying that he did think it was a dinosaur, but he would need more photos. The committee heard from Pearl Langdon that Doug said, 'I do not know because of the floods.' Anyway, Doug got there. He had to swim the pony across a couple of small channels, but he got the photos. He sent them to Longreach to have them developed, they got the photos back, they sent them to Alan via the mail service and Alan said, 'You have got something.'

Doug and Pearl, you bet you had something. You held in your hands at the kitchen table a piece of Queensland history. Dr Bartholomai and his team came out and dug out that first specimen. They found the bones and the head and preserved them in the Queensland Museum for hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders, especially Queensland kids, to see.

For honourable members who do not know, Doug has now passed away. When I asked his widow, Pearl, 'What would Doug think of this now, all these years later?'—his forethought and interest in creating the state's fossil emblem—in that hall in Muttaborra where the committee was sitting, she said—and there was not a dry eye in the house when she said it—

To be quite honest, I think if he is looking down here, I think he would be saying that is the best thing he had ever done for Muttaborra. He put Muttaborra on the map by saying, 'I don't want it. I've been asked for millions of dollars for it. I will not sell it.' He sent it to the museum and he said 'Queensland has Muttaborra, has the dinosaur, they can work out how they are going to clean it up and display it for everybody to see.' When that was done he was very proud when they rang up and said it was going to be called the *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni*, our surname with an 'i' on the end of it. He was so proud of it.

Pearl went on to say—

Unfortunately, he has not seen the interpretation centre. He knew of it, but he did not survive to see it. I think he would be so proud of the Muttaborra community that has worked so hard to get this building up to honour the town and, of course, it is honouring him and it has got his name now.

Doug and Pearl, you are great Queenslanders and we are honoured by your gift to us. It is right and proper that we have these animals and these bones as our fossil emblem. It is a story 100 million years in the making and has been told since 1962. It is an ancient story from a different Australia but also Doug's, Pearl's and Muttaborra's story of believing that their little piece of history was worth preserving for their town, for all Queenslanders, for all time. Today we can elevate that humble piece of stone on the Langdons' kitchen table to its honoured place as a state fossil emblem.

I want to thank all the members of the committee, especially my esteemed deputy chair. We were welcomed so warmly in the town of Winton by the Mayor of the Winton shire Council, Councillor Gavin Baskett, and by the Mayor of Barcaldine Regional Council, Councillor Sean Dillon. They did a great job in advocating for their town and for dinosaur tourism. I certainly hope I have not ruined any of their preselection chances by saying they are great blokes!

I also want to recognise the Australian Age of Dinosaurs and the Museum of Natural History—Mr David Elliott and Ms Naomi Miles, who both welcomed us so warmly to the museum. They were the ones who kicked off this process of having a fossil emblem. They had a different nominee, a fantastic nominee we thought. They were so warm and generous about the *muttaburrasaurus* getting the gong because they knew it was going to be great for the entire region. They also know it was a great story. I want to thank them. Every Queenslander should take the time to drive out to Barcaldine and to Winton and to visit the Australian Age of Dinosaurs. It is an extraordinary piece of history and an extraordinary testament to David's dedication to the fossils of Queensland.

Lastly, I want to inform the opposition leader that this committee is so committed to dinosaur and Palaeolithic tourism that we are—and I am surprised he has not been following it, as many Queenslanders are following our great examination of this—going to conduct a further inquiry that we self-initiated into Palaeolithic and dinosaur tourism. We see extraordinary opportunities to showcase—not just to use as a hook—our dinosaur and Palaeolithic history as well as the dedication of those communities and the warmth of Central and Outback Queensland, which is absolutely fantastic. One of the things we will be concentrating on is getting international visitors to feel that warmth and to see the welcoming and fantastic communities out there. I again thank Doug and Pearl and I thank all of Muttaborra, Winton and Barcaldine for the warmth they showed to the committee.