




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (5.04 pm): I rise to make a short contribution on the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. For the majority of my contribution, I will talk about the value of the dinosaur industry to rural communities of Queensland. I commend the work of my ministerial colleague, Minister Hinchliffe. I applaud his efforts on this bill. It is not very often that a new state emblem is declared, especially one that has been millions of years in the making. The committee should also be thanked for their work on the bill. The committee travelled to rural communities to engage with stakeholders in the process to establish the *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* as the state's official fossil emblem.

It may seem a little odd to be talking about making an animal that died millions of years ago a state emblem. Without straying into the territory of the committee's current inquiry into prehistoric, dinosaur and palaeo tourism in Outback Queensland, it is really important to note that we have rich places of interest to visit away from our usual tourism centres. During the COVID period, many people travelled to Central Queensland and found a new enjoyment in the regions and in seeing what Queensland has to offer. We have plenty to offer in Queensland

This is not the first time I have had the pleasure of engaging on dinosaurs. While I was a Queensland senator in the Commonwealth parliament, I was asked to attend an opening of the Cambridge Downs store in Richmond. After that opening, Mayor John Wharton took me to Kronosaurus Korner. I think it is worth noting that other areas of Queensland also have wonderful attractions when it comes to dinosaurs—areas such as Richmond, which is world renowned for its 110-million-year old marine fossils. I note that *Kronosaurus queenslandicus* was shortlisted for the emblem but did not make the cut. The committee report noted that the kronosaurus dinosaur was an enormous ocean-dwelling pliosaur that fed on turtles, fish, sharks and other marine reptiles and lived between 98 million and 112 million years ago. When you are in Central Queensland, 500 kilometres from the coast, it is hard to believe that you are standing in what was once an inland sea.

It is not just Queensland children who are fascinated by dinosaurs; there are other tourists as well. The town of Winton is important to this bill and the committee travelled there for their inquiry. It was in Winton where the 2020 campaign to establish a state fossil emblem originated. I note there were a few unsuccessful candidates from Winton, but the Australian Age of Dinosaurs and the town are still well worth a visit. A few years ago I had much pleasure in taking the then Japanese consul general, Tanaka-san, to the Australian Age of Dinosaurs in Winton.

I want to reflect on my experience of first visiting the Australian Age of Dinosaurs when I was the local government minister. I also want to reflect on a real legend of the bush, Mayor Butch Lenton. He was one of those characters who, from the moment you met him, you knew was genuine and you knew you were going to get on with. He mentioned the Age of Dinosaurs. I said, 'What's the chance of going there?' He said, 'Let's go and do it.' I was extremely impressed and that is why I encourage anyone who is visiting the area to take the opportunity to go to the Age of Dinosaurs.

In 2019, the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association held their annual dinner at the Age of Dinosaurs. The guest speaker was the late Andrew Symonds, the famous cricketer. The New Zealand and Japanese consuls general joined me in a celebration of Australian agriculture. After the Bowen Gumlu Growers event, the Japanese consuls and I flew to Winton. The consul general remarked on the size of the state and how Japanese tourists would find it a very different experience. The attraction of the dinosaurs as well as the wonderful agriculture of Winton highlight the great benefits of having a fossil emblem to attract visitors from right around the world. In its report the committee stated—

The Maranoa Regional Council, Australian Age of Dinosaurs, Winton Shire Council, Barcaldine Shire Council, Red Dirt Tours, Flinders Shire Council, and residents of Muttaborra all expressed support for the Muttaborrasaurus dinosaur as the state's fossil emblem.

Such stakeholders acknowledged that there may have been preferences for other candidates, particularly within the regions in which those respected fossils were discovered. Reference was made to the fact that parts of the muttaburrasaurus had also been found in New South Wales. However, there is also a general acknowledgement by those stakeholders that the muttaburrasaurus is a significant and well-known dinosaur as well as being one of the most complete fossils found in Queensland. The committee visited the Muttaborrasaurus Interpretive Centre, which charts the history of the discovery of the muttaburrasaurus. It is also worth a visit as part of any trip to Queensland. I also would like to read part of the statement from Pearl Langton's account. She said—

I forget, I think someone said about 1983 they named it *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni*. Doug put his hand in the air, 'Muttaborra, you're on the map!'

The bill now puts this dinosaur as the Queensland emblem and Muttaborra on the map. Rural communities in Queensland will benefit from this bill. Future generations of Queenslanders will have a great experience in learning about this dinosaur, the rural communities where they roamed and, no doubt, the other emblems of Queensland.

I note that this bill contains other measures including: amendments to recognise participation in committee meetings by telephone, video or other electronic means; amendments to the Parliamentary Service Act 1988; and amendments to refine the process for notifying of proxy votes and other technical amendments. They all are being supported as part of the only recommendation of the committee—that the bill be passed. It is an honour to speak in this debate as Minister for Rural Communities as this bill will have real and lasting benefits for communities across Queensland, through ongoing interest in the fossil emblem and the other candidates, in tourism and educational opportunities. They will continue to inject funds and visitors into these towns. I commend the bill to the House.