




Speech By  
**Michael Healy**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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## **EMBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (5.29 pm): That was riveting. How can you make a meal of this? I am looking forward to making a contribution to this debate because this is such a fantastic topic. What is also fantastic about the topic is the by-product of it. I will begin by stating the obvious: I strongly support the Emblems of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The proposal is to amend the Emblems of Queensland Act 2005 to officially recognise the muttaburrasaurus dinosaur as the state's fossil emblem. I have spent a great deal of time discussing this with the minister, and we know that it was a hotly contested field. There are a lot of people who would have liked to get this, but each and every one of them represents a fantastic part of our state. This state has an amazing history, and I am confident that as we move forward we are going to see more of it.

This act will confirm the outcome of a public vote on 12 fossil candidates from around Queensland. We saw the muttaburrasaurus emerge as the people's choice to represent the state and its rich palaeontological history. I am very envious that, as part of its examination of the bill, the committee considered advice from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and feedback from stakeholders provided by three submissions, a public hearing held in Winton and a public forum held in Muttaborra on 5 October 2023.

Before I get into the exciting bits about the dinosaur, I do want to mention that the bill also contains certain amendments to the Crime and Corruption Commission Act 2001, the Parliamentary Service Act 1988 and the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to address a number of minor and technical issues to improve and clarify parliamentary processes and procedures, including to clarify that the parliamentary precinct includes the Legislative Assembly chamber and its galleries when the Legislative Assembly is sitting and to provide that the Speaker is to prepare the human rights certificate and explanatory notes for by-laws and rules made by the Speaker under the act. Another important one is to amend the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to refine the process by which a member of the Legislative Assembly in a state of ill health has their request for a proxy vote notified to the Assembly. The last point I want to note is that the bill will also amend the Parliament of Queensland Act to update a number of cross-references in the act to definitions that are explained and provided for in the Electoral Act 1992.

The bill proposes to amend the Emblems of Queensland Act 2005 to officially recognise the muttaburrasaurus as the state's fossil emblem. The Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia all have official fossil emblems—some of those could be people—respectively: an ancient marine creature, two ancient fish and an ancient sea worm. The amendments would see Queensland join the ranks of these other jurisdictions by officially confirming the muttaburrasaurus as Queensland's chosen state fossil.

I know that we have heard from a few members, but I really feel the need to go through this because I think this creature sounds impressive. The muttaburrasaurus lived in the Cretaceous period, and I know from listening to the chair of the committee, who is an expert in this area, that that was about

100 million years ago. It was seven to eight metres long, the average length of a couple of cars. It was not a meat eater. It was an ornithopod dinosaur, which meant that it was bird footed, but it differed from other ornithopods because it had an inflated, bulbous snout, a big head—

**Ms Boyd** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** That is right—and a powerful bite with specialised shearing teeth, as we have heard from one of the members.

**Mr Mellish** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** No, I have moved on. I am not talking about the member for Mermaid Beach. These teeth were used for eating plants such as ferns and conifers.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** That is a bit harsh, isn't it? I can tell you that it is absolutely amazing. As we have heard from a number of people here today, many of us have driven out to these parts and we have seen these amazing facilities and the infrastructure that is out there. I can tell you that from a tourism perspective, particularly when you take into account the fact that parts of our state have been ravaged by drought, it is a tough way to make a living out there. This is creating significant new opportunities—

**Mr Stevens** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** Correct. I will take that interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. The Australian Dinosaur Trail encompasses the towns of Winton, Hughenden and Richmond, which all have their own unique dinosaur stories to tell. A journey along the Dinosaur Trail offers visitors a range of unique experiences not available anywhere else in the world, let alone Australia. In Winton you can visit Lark Quarry Dinosaur Trackways, which is set in an amazing landscape of red earth, spinifex and jump-up country. You can see the dinosaur footprints that inspired the dinosaur stampede in Steven Spielberg's movie *Jurassic Park*. Head to the Australian Age of Dinosaurs museum to see the world's largest collection of Australian dinosaur fossils. It is absolutely fantastic to see the way it is presented and the enthusiasm of the staff, and we are talking about regional areas. In Hughenden meet Hughie, a skeletal muttaburrasaurus at the Flinders Discovery Centre. Travel north from Hughenden to Porcupine Gorge National Park to see 500-million-year-old layers of rock formations in this deep gorge, which is known as 'Australia's little Grand Canyon'. In Richmond you can visit Kronosaurus Korner, which is—

**Mr Stevens** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** My apologies; I will take that interjection. It is coming back. I am happy to be corrected on that point—which is primarily dedicated to displaying marine reptiles because, as most of us would know, that used to be part of an inland sea. I can tell you that these are some of the best preserved skeletal remains anywhere. Then if you go to Eromanga, Stuart and Robyn McKenzie, who have discovered Australia's largest dinosaur, have a fantastic, world-class facility. Stuart and Robyn do a great job and it is fantastic. Seriously, you only have to look at the—

**Mr Stevens** interjected.

**Mr HEALY:** I did; that is correct. I went out there; I opened it. Before I became the assistant minister I took my son and we drove from Cairns to Hughenden. Then we went out to Richmond and then we went down to Winton, so we did this. It is a fantastic, exquisite part of Queensland. This provides a fantastic new opportunity for our regional areas. As everybody in this chamber knows, you do it tough in those areas, particularly when Mother Nature is not on your side.

In terms of Outback Queensland dinosaur tourism, visitor numbers are expected to increase to 1.2 million visitor days and nights over the next 15 years. The Palaszczuk Labor government has invested millions into this. This level of visitation contributes to broader tourism and economic activity across the region. Research produced for Tourism and Events Queensland identified that visitors spent more than seven times what they spend at the dinosaur attraction in the local economy before and after their visit. These are the sorts of things you really want to remember. Go in and purchase some really good commodities, take them home and put them on the shelf.

There is no doubt about it: millions of dollars will continue to be invested and millions of dollars will continue to be made. We are a government that recognises the importance of the tourism component out there. The future potential for dinosaur tourism in both direct and indirect impacts is estimated to more than double over the next 15 years to 2035-36, generating over \$80 million for Queensland's visitor economy and supporting 1,373 jobs. That is outstanding.

I want to acknowledge the committee and the work they have done. I also want to acknowledge the Queensland Museum and the contribution they make when people make these discoveries. I am confident that we will see more discoveries as our interior continues to dry up. It will provide great economic opportunities and the government will be here to support them. I want to acknowledge the enthusiasm of my parliamentary colleague and the minister. It is a great event and I look forward to getting out to these parts in the near future and enjoying them again.