




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 16 April 2024

LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (11.39 am): Firstly, I would like to congratulate both the member for Inala and the member for Ipswich West on winning their by-elections. I also congratulate the member for Inala on her maiden speech.

The Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) is a comprehensive bill. It is 120-pages long and incorporates amendments to many acts. The minister could have ensured that there was more opportunity to scrutinise every clause and every detail. However, in typical Labor form, they are doing what suits them and have dumped a huge bill into this House.

The bill includes amendments to the Place Names Act 1994 that the government claim will broaden considerations to reflect contemporary issues and make decision-making processes more flexible and transparent. The proposed changes will reduce the public consultation time on a proposed name change from two months to one. The bill will allow the minister to delegate. Allowing the minister to pass the buck to the chief executive is completely inappropriate in this instance. The minister needs to step up and be held accountable. Ministers are elected by the people and should be responsible for these decisions, not unelected bureaucrats. The cutting of consultation time for proposed name changes is another example of the Labor government stripping Queenslanders of the right to have their voices heard. For communities, placenames are more than just a name. They are a sense of identity. They are part of history and a part of culture. It is only fair that the community be given fair consultation time.

The amendments also have considerable cost implications for local governments as trustees of state land. In its submission, the LGAQ's recommendation 10 is that the state government should provide funding to assist local government with associated costs. The LGAQ's recommendation 11 is that the state government provide funding to offset costs that result from the renaming of recreation areas. We all know the mess that the government made with the renaming of Fraser Island to K'gari and the significant cost implications that came with that. The opposition supports these recommendations from the LGAQ to ensure that councils are not unfairly burdened with the cost of changing a placename. We will be opposing the clauses in this bill that amend the Place Names Act.

The member for Burdekin was going to talk further about this issue during consideration in detail. He took this photo, which I will table on his behalf, at the Mackay airport the other day. It is of the main gate to a flight to Brisbane, except there is one problem: the gate does not say it is a flight to 'Brisbane'; it says 'Meanjin'. This is a sinister attempt by a big corporate that has lost touch with mainstream Australia, and this government is trying to further enable those actions with this proposed change.

Tabled paper: Photograph depicting an airport gate sign [565](#).

Imagine you are a tourist. You rock up to your plane, thinking you are heading to some great place in Australia, whether it be Brisbane, Gladstone or another part of this great state. When you go to board your plane you see a sign with a completely different destination, but you have no idea where that is. I can only imagine the confusion, especially for tourists who do not have English as their native

tongue and who struggle with our language, which, as tourists, is completely understandable. The attitude of our airlines and big corporates in relation to this is disgraceful. The fact that the government wants to further enable that is a disgrace.

If the Miles Labor government cares about democracy then the business motion should be amended to give us the right to vote on this legislation as we wish and to outline more of our concerns with this issue. Most likely, in a further assault on democracy, we will not be given that opportunity, which is why I just tabled that photo on behalf of the member for Burdekin. He was going to put more on the record in consideration in detail but it looks like we are going to run out of time. We are concerned that Labor will use this legislation to further their sinister moves to push for divisive name changes even when Queenslanders absolutely reject them.

In Queensland there are over 26,000 reserves with a total area exceeding one million hectares. Local governments and state government agencies are the primary trustees that manage trust land. Many community groups are also direct trustees or manage those facilities on behalf of local government. These include show societies—of which I have 19 in my electorate, the most of any member of parliament in Queensland—sports clubs, RSLs and children's playgroups. We have a couple of great community groups, show societies, RSLs and playgroups, such as the one at Calliope, across the great electorate of Callide.

I do note that there are issues with managing land as trustees, and the North Burnett Regional Council has been dealing with some of these. As a council that is significantly underfunded by the Miles Labor government, it has to make drastic decisions to save on costs as well as to pass costs on to groups that manage trustee land. That makes the operations of groups such as show societies and other clubs less viable, taking key facilities and services out of the communities. That is the cost of the Miles Labor government to Queenslanders.

The bill will enable the minister to dedicate reserves for any purpose to address a community need that is in the public interest. The bill will provide for pastoral term leaseholders to diversify how they use their land by removing the limitation that prevents supplementary purposes being added. The department advised this will support leaseholders to be more resilient following natural disasters or poor seasonal conditions, and that is certainly a move that is worthwhile. We should be doing everything we can to ensure that government gets out of the way and lets business do business, whether that is in agriculture or other industries.

We want to see the processes for community groups become less burdensome, but there are no guarantees that that will be the case. I call on the minister to ensure that these changes are applied in ways that are of significant benefit to communities and, of course, with appropriate consultation.

The bill introduces mandatory payment of local government rates and charges for petroleum, gas, geothermal and greenhouse gas resource activities similar to mining leases. These charges will apply retrospectively. Amendments will allow non-payment of rates to be considered in the renewal processes for a resource authority and will provide the minister with the discretion to use security payments to offset unpaid local rates and charges.

The resource industry supports one in six Queenslanders' jobs, generates 82 per cent of the value of Queensland's exports and contributes \$1 in every \$4 to the state economy. It is important that any changes to tax regimes for industry in Queensland are done without scaring off investors. If only the Treasurer and Deputy Premier considered this. Maybe he should have actually consulted with the Minister for Resources before imposing the highest mining taxes in the world.

With regard to these amendments, it is clear that something needs to change to crack down on rogue operators who have abused the system and failed to pay councils their dues. There are no provisions for how these rates and charges will be determined and no statutory constraints on the power of local government to determine rates and charges. Councils certainly need autonomy in doing this. However, concerns raised by the QRC in their submission included the significant sovereign risks that this will place on resource operations in Queensland and the negative effect this will have on growth and competition in the resources sector. I suggest that that comes on the back of their other concerns about sovereign risk, which is now considered a part of Queensland thanks to the highest mining taxes in the world that came with this Labor government.

Queensland does not have a limit on the extent that rates can increase. The QRC has cited examples of possible rate increases of up to 743 per cent over a three-year period. For this to be determined, it is imperative that the state government consult with local government to develop a fair, sustainable and equitable system. There is currently a Queensland government guideline on equity and fairness for Queensland local governments to refer to when determining rates. This is merely a guideline

that sets out an acceptable minimum standard for rates. The QRC has outlined concerns with the current system that local governments are not upholding the principles of the guideline, that there is an inability to appeal rates issues and that unreasonable increases are occurring without jurisdiction.

In their submission, the LGAQ recommended that a local government advisory panel be established as part of the Department of Resources. It is suggested that that panel be made up of experienced council representatives, including land management officers. The opposition certainly agrees with this recommendation.

I congratulate all of the new mayors and councillors across Queensland who have recently been elected. It certainly is a privilege to serve in all facets of community and society. I look forward to meeting all of the councillors and mayors across the electorate of Callide in the near future. As the debate has been guillotined and more members will not be able to speak as they wish, I place on the record that we will be opposing the Place Names Act if Labor affords us the opportunity to do so.