




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2024

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.38 pm): I rise to speak to the Transport and Resources Committee's report No. 46 titled *Public works inquiry into the state-controlled roads from Birdsville to Bedourie and Birdsville to Windorah*. I specifically reference local government authorities experiencing high costs to maintain roads due to restricted access to government gravel quarry areas. Through its inquiry, the committee found that the costs are avoidable and calls on my department, which manages the sale of state owned quarry material under the Forestry Act 1959, and the Department of Resources to continue to work with local councils and native title partners to resolve council gravel pit access issues.

I can assure the House that local government access to state owned quarries is fundamental; it is a bedrock issue, in fact, for my department. I can also inform the House that, following the recent local government elections, I am in the process of writing to all relevant Queensland mayors to provide them with an update on quarry negotiations in their area, and this has been going on for some time given our engagement with some of those previous mayors as well. Now with the elections complete, we will deal with the newly elected mayors and their councillors. However, notwithstanding our willingness to assist and get resolutions as soon as possible, I must be clear that my department is required to comply with the federal Native Title Act 1993 and other legislation before granting, varying or renewing a quarry sale permit. In some cases that is what people forget in terms of seeking resolutions to moving forward for access to these quarry resources.

I refer to page 21 of the committee report that raises the issue of compliance with native title and the ongoing and urgent focus that my department has committed to in seeking a resolution of this matter. There are situations where my department cannot issue or renew a quarry sales permit to authorise certain quarry pits until native title is validly addressed. In some cases, consent for relevant native title parties through an Indigenous land use agreement, or ILUA, is required to comply with the Native Title Act. An ILUA can require significant time and financial commitment from the parties involved in negotiations. Due to the lengthy process, my department is working with permit holders to review their quarry needs and with traditional owners to discuss continuity of quarry material supply. My department is prioritising those permits expiring before 2026 and is working directly with local governments to secure their quarry material needs, identifying opportunities to rationalise sites where this material may continue to be obtained.

Some 11 interim agreements have been signed to enable time for binding ILUAs to be negotiated. In some cases, parties have elected to rely on pre-existing ILUAs that provide the necessary future act consent. Through this process, the department has initiated engagement with 13 native title holders and claimants about the proposed ILUA necessary to secure native title holders' consent. Several local governments have been able to maintain much of their required supply through state owned quarry

material. For example, Quilpie Shire Council has been able to continue access to 63 of its required 75 quarry pits. Boulia Shire Council originally had 105 quarry pits listed on its permit but has since revised that down to 42 pits. A lot of those were disused, so it found ways to identify those that are available for use. Of those, the department has been able to renew 32 pits to date.

My department will continue to work with local governments, the LGAQ and native title holders to secure a solution where required pits have not been able to be added to councils' quarry permits. My department is utilising other valid options such as relocating quarry materials to alternative sites, where possible, to provide continuity of supply of state owned quarry materials. We are working with the Department of Resources as well. We have a dedicated team of seconded native title specialists from both departments to ensure we work through that process through consultation and negotiations. We will continue to work collaboratively with local government, native title holders, claimants and other departments to make sure we manage this important issue. We do understand the pressures and the need for meeting native title requirements under the federal act. We will continue down that path as required by law to ensure we maintain the valuable resources in the western province.