




Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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### **LAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.04 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Land and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will be making it short today because this bill has been guillotined, as we know, which makes it difficult to go into some of the complexities in the bill. I start with placenames. For me, the issue is not so much that we should not be looking at some of these names. For example, in Toowoomba we have Table Top, referred to locally as Meewah and I do not think anybody has any strong objections to having a discussion about renaming it Meewah. However, at the moment, if people go up there and hurt themselves then someone has to call a helicopter. If that is not the registered place for the helicopter to arrive at or if the name is not gazetted on the map and the change has not been made through a proper consultation process then there is an issue.

When we were looking at the Second Range Crossing infrastructure, a committee of interested stakeholders was set up. I was one of those people. We discussed and debated whether one of the bridges should be called Giabal-Jarowair Bridge, marking the local custodians of the land in that area. We did that and that was great. There is also Multuggerah Way. Multuggerah was an Aboriginal warrior who showed people up the range and the viaduct was named after him. Those are important things that should mark a place and the history that belongs to all Australians. Undeniably, Australia's history is Indigenous. If you go back to pre-colonial times then, obviously, it is an Indigenous history. There was some dispute about one of the bridges which I wanted to be called Ugarapul, but it is called Helidon Spa Bridge because there was some debate amongst various local groups as to whether or not that is actually their territory. These things are far from settled.

For me, the most important thing is that if we are going to consider changing placenames then it should be done in a sensible way, with stakeholder consultation and with adequate compensation to local councils that might have to remake maps, change websites and print new signs, incurring a great deal of cost. It should not be done at the whim of a bureaucrat or at the whim of a minister. It should be done with the local community's consultation, support and understanding as to why that is particularly important. The minister previously spoke about renaming some placenames that I would support because I think they are offensive and should be renamed. However, that also needs to be done cautiously because, if they do mark a massacre, perhaps the name should be kept so that the massacre is noted as part of the history. However, I am not the person to decide that; that should be for the local community and the local groups that are affected by that placename.

For me, it is all about consultation. There are several elements of this bill where the consultation has been poor, where stakeholders have not been adequately engaged and where government is trying to centralise control. Over and above that, we then find that the debate on these issues is being curtailed in this place. Either we have a functioning democracy or we have a dictatorship. I believe that correct stakeholder engagement, correct processes, genuine consultation over a period and public debate should be held on matters that are important, whether they be historical or future looking such as how we are going to treat a placename going forward. It is important that we consider it.

I now go to the second part of the bill to do resource extraction and various people not paying appropriate rates. I think we all agree that fair and reasonable rates should be paid by someone who has been given a right to extract resources out of Queensland. I do not think anybody disputes that. It is a matter of what is fair and reasonable, what is decent consultation and what is appropriate so that it does not create a sovereign risk. We want people to invest in our resource extraction. We want people to come to Queensland and see us as a jurisdiction where they can do business. Unfortunately, on several occasions now, without consultation, without discussion and without looking to long-term future consequences this government has made decisions that increase our sovereign risk.

We all know that government controlled elements affect our rating in the Fraser Institute—an institute that rates resource jurisdictions against each other for sensible investment—and that Queensland is dropping down that list based on government controlled legislation. What I am saying is: yes, those landholders who have been given rights to extract or explore should pay the appropriate rates. I do not think anybody can dispute that. It needs to be done in a sensible way. It needs to be done with good consultation so that it does not create a sovereign risk that means that people do not want to invest in our local communities.

The one thing that would be worse than not being paid rates from someone who is there and having to mount a long process to get those rates out of them, would be to have nobody willing to invest in those areas at all because it is seen as just too risky. 'I will go to another jurisdiction such as West Australia or South Australia' that is much higher—in the 20s above us—in terms of the ratings from the Fraser Institute. We do not want them to go there. We want them to invest in Queensland. We want our local councils to be able to have appropriate rates and charges. We want to be able to get royalties out, but it needs to be done in a consultative, sensible way, and that is the flaw of this government. It does not want to consult; it does not want to listen; it does not want to understand. It just wants to tell, dictate and go for short-term politicisation so that it can grasp onto power. That is the reason I find some parts of this bill very difficult to support.

With that, so that others have a chance to speak, I will cut my contribution short because the Labor Party does not want everybody to speak. I do not know why they want to get up and speak; they should be busy letting the members who do not want to speak from the opposition bench speak.