

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 829

asked on Tuesday, 19 November 2013

MR HOBBS ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINES (MR CRIPPS)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise of the legislative reforms in the Department of Natural Resources and Mines that have reduced the regulatory burden on landholders?

ANSWER:

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines has delivered a number of initiatives that have reduced regulatory burden on landholders across the state.

Initiatives that have reduced administrative burden, have achieved monetary savings and have improved certainty in decision making include:

- a series of reforms achieved through the *Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2013* passed by Parliament on 2 May 2013;
- extensive vegetation management reforms, including easier renewal of fodder permits;
- reforms relating to strategic cropping land, stock routes and grazing on roads, repeal of a statutory advice role on acid sulphate soils, and streamlining of the state rural leasehold land strategy;
- reforms enabling online service, such as the Queensland Globe and electronic transfer of property;
- reforms in other business areas within the department, especially water.

Key benefits derived by landholders from reforms already accomplished include:

Land related initiatives

- A number of amendments to the *Land Act 1994* within the *Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2013* have reduced the level of government involvement in day-to-day affairs thus freeing up landholders time:
 - Trustee leases: Provided a trustee lease or other dealing is made subject to the terms of a relevant mandatory standard terms document, the Land Act now allows local governments and other statutory trustees of trust land to enter into trustee leases and dealings with trustees without the need for ministerial approval.
 - Application process: Application processes have been streamlined by providing a shorter process, and allowing applicants (rather than the department) to seek third party approvals before an application is made.
 - Lease renewal and lease conversion considerations: Out-dated provisions designed to achieve closer settlement of agricultural areas have been repealed, allowing lease renewals to be processed more quickly.
 - When rent is owing: Legislation now confirms that rent is not payable if the lessee has paid the purchase price of freehold leased land, particularly in situations where processes for Governor in Council approval and gazettal are still ongoing.

- Short-term lease extension: A short-term extension of a lease for periods of up to two years, rather than one year, is now possible to mitigate the risk of a lease expiring before it can be renewed.
 - Future conservation areas: The future conservation area provisions have been repealed, streamlining the rural leasehold land lease renewal process and providing certainty for leaseholders by increasing their security of tenure.
 - Severing joint tenancy by transfer: The Land Act now makes it clear that a joint tenant is able to sever a joint tenancy by executing and registering a transfer when the chief executive is satisfied that a reasonable attempt has been made by the joint tenant to give a copy of the instrument of transfer to all other joint tenants.
 - Rural leasehold land area threshold: The threshold to which mandatory land management agreements apply at lease renewal has been increased to 1000 hectares or more, reducing red tape for smaller leases. Also, a simplified land management agreement has provided landholders renewing their grazing leases with simpler processes and greater certainty (October 2012).
- **Vegetation management** reforms have provided a clearer approval path for applicants, and self-assessable codes are being developed to further reduce red tape.
 - **Area management plan regulatory tools** will save landholders covered by them the time and cost involved in applying for an individual permit.
 - **Strategic cropping land amendments** have reduced decision times, application costs and application fees (delivered in January 2013).
 - **Streamlining vegetation clearing permit extensions** has resulted in savings of time and expense when applying to continue an existing, approved activity (delivered in October 2012).
 - **Acid sulphate soils** reforms remove the department as an advice agency, saving up to 30 days in the application assessment process (delivered in August 2012).
 - **Renewal of fodder permit** reform has simplified fodder harvesting permit renewal and provided significant benefits to landholders in South West Queensland (delivered in September 2012).
 - **Electronic property transfers** have reduced the time and effort involved in property conveyancing and related title transactions, thereby reducing the risk of settlements failing (delivered in May 2013).
 - **The Queensland Globe computer program** allows users to easily apply State Government data to Google Earth satellite images, thus providing useful spatial data to landholders (delivered in April 2013).

Water related initiatives

- Water licences will no longer expire after 10 years. These changes reduce red tape for water users and deliver greater certainty for landholders, while still achieving responsible and productive use of our water resources.
- Mining tenement holders no longer need to apply for a water licence for watercourse diversions on their mining tenement where the diversion has been assessed and conditioned as part of gaining an environmental authority. This

red tape reduction initiative means that mining tenement holders will no longer need to obtain two separate approvals for the same activity.

- Water licences or permits are generally no longer required for low-risk activities. This common-sense change reduces red tape for water users intending to take water for activities that pose minimal risk to the resource. It also enables departmental officers to focus on protecting our water resources from high-risk activities.
- Landholders no longer need to develop, gain approval for and implement land and water management plans—this represents significant savings for affected landholders. This enables irrigators to self-manage impacts associated with land and water use. Reducing red tape and developing practical approaches to land and water management will help irrigators get on with growing their business without unnecessary regulation. Water-use plans will continue to provide a mechanism to manage land and water degradation in areas identified as high risk.
- Riverine protection permit reform has removed duplication in gaining approval to clear vegetation in a watercourse. This approach reduces red tape and simplifies approval processes for landholders. All clearing and destruction of vegetation is now regulated under one framework in Queensland, namely, the framework provided in the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.