

**MINING AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 29 March.

**HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [4.22 pm]: I rise on behalf of the opposition to contribute to the second reading debate on the Mining Amendment Bill 2023. I indicate from the outset that I am the lead speaker for the opposition on this bill, and the opposition will not be opposing it. Most of the provisions in the bill are non-contentious. There will obviously be a few queries raised during the second reading debate and the committee stage of the bill; however, the opposition does not anticipate lengthy debate on this bill.

What is this bill about? The introduction and overview of the explanatory memorandum goes to some length to explain that this bill is about making amendments to the Mining Act to address objections by carbon farmers to applications for mining tenements that would serve as a de facto exclusion of mining activity over the ground over which there is an objection. The bill proposes changes to reduce the risk of that occurring, and largely cites the fact that the mining industry is a significant contributor to the state's bottom line, which, of course, it is.

We know that the opposition has had briefings from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety on this bill. My colleague in the other place the member for Central Wheatbelt, who is the shadow Minister for Mines and Petroleum, attended an online briefing with the department on 2 May and, subsequent to that, further consulted with stakeholders in the mining industry and other industries, as well, in order to understand their opinions on the bill. I am pleased to report that, largely, there are no particularly significant issues with the bill itself.

I want to talk a little bit about climate change or climate policy and carbon farming, as it were, in order to dig into what this bill is actually intended to do; perhaps this afternoon we will get a little way into that before we are interrupted for the taking of questions. The government has its climate policy set out in a document titled *Western Australian climate policy*, which refers to carbon farming and the opportunities, I guess, that exist in Western Australia for carbon farming. At page 20 of that document, under the heading "Storing carbon and caring for our landscapes", it states —

Western Australia's significant land mass and extensive coastline provide enormous potential for carbon sequestration (storage) in vegetation and soils. Our rangelands occupy about 2.2 million square kilometres and can sequester large amounts of carbon, improving rangeland conditions and financial resilience for pastoralists.

Further down that page is "Case study 4: Carbon farming on Western Australia's pastoral lease lands". I think that is the application in which we will see this particular bill applied, as there are several exemptions in the bill to freehold land. The case study states —

The State Government is backing carbon farming on pastoral leases, allowing pastoralists to undertake projects to support the regeneration of native vegetation through managing cattle grazing, which sequesters carbon while improving pastoral productivity. The State Government's announcement on eligible interest holder consent has led to the registration of 59 projects —

This was back in 2020 —

under the Australian Government's Emissions Reduction Fund ... delivering an estimated 9 million tonnes of carbon abatement and around \$130 million in revenue for pastoralists.

An additional 15 million tonnes of carbon abatement are expected to be sold directly to major greenhouse gas emitters who need to purchase carbon credits to offset their emissions.

The case study continues —

The decision follows extensive consultation with the mining industry, pastoralists and Aboriginal representative bodies and carefully balances the rights of pastoralists and mining interests.

It is interesting in the first instance that undoubtedly it was not the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety that conducted that consultation; nevertheless, I wonder if that consultation did in fact identify the risk of challenge of mining leases by proponents of carbon farming. I am not sure whether the minister will be able to answer that, because it may not have been a consultation conducted by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety in that case, but I guess the question is: has the government identified in the past the risks of blocking, essentially, of mining activity on the basis of carbon farming?

In the time available, I will begin a reference to another document from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development that talks about Western Australia's carbon farming and land restoration program, which is, again, a program that seeks to promote the government's carbon farming commitments. Again, there is no problem with carbon farming. I think it is a great initiative that allows diversification of income for landholders and leaseholders, and I think that is definitely a good platform. It is also interesting, though, that it is a significant part of the government's

climate policy. This program refers to the fact that participants in this program play an integral role in WA's response to climate change and contribute to the state government's aspiration to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, again highlighting the importance of carbon farming to government, and obviously to those involved in agriculture and pastoralism in Western Australia, as well. Obviously, the government is very keen to promote its carbon farming credentials, and has released a number of media statements to do so. I will refer to a couple of those perhaps later on.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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