

STATE ARMS, SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS AMENDMENT (FOSSIL EMBLEM) BILL 2015

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts, read a first time and ordered to be printed.
Second Reading**

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [3.58 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The State Arms, Symbols and Emblems Amendment (Fossil Emblem) Bill 2015 seeks to introduce into the inventory of State Arms, Symbols and Emblems mandageria fairfaxi as the official State Fossil Emblem of New South Wales. As all members of this House would be aware, currently there is no legislated form of a State fossil emblem in New South Wales. This bill seeks to remedy that and put in place a State fossil emblem that has special palaeontologic significance to New South Wales. The fossil will join our other familiar State emblems: the animal emblem, the platypus; the bird emblem, the kookaburra; the State fish, the blue groper; the gemstone emblem, the black opal; and, of course, our wonderful State floral emblem, the waratah.

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The inclusion of the mandageria fairfaxi in New South Wales' officially recognised emblems is a widely supported move by a wide range of palaeontologists and geologists alike, such as those at the Australian Museum and at the Geological Survey of NSW.

The mandageria fairfaxi roamed freshwater rivers and lakes around the State 370 million years ago. This period—the Devonian period—was also known as the "Age of Fishes", and is recognised as an era in which fish life ruled supreme throughout the ecosystem. The fossil was discovered in a most innocuous manner. Midway through 1955 just outside the town of Canowindra in the Central West a bulldozer driver conducting roadworks in the area was excavating some rock slab. Upon turning one piece of slab, he noticed some marks on the rock that he had never encountered before. Thinking that this could be something special, he put the slab to one side, and in early 1956 it was moved to the Australian Museum in Sydney for storage and analysis. However, nearly 40 years passed before further exploration of the site was undertaken. It proved to be the richest fish fossil site of its kind in the world.

Eight types of long-extinct fish were discovered, the largest being the mandageria fairfaxi. The fossil was first thoroughly described by Dr Zerina Johanson, followed by the Australian Museum in Sydney, after which the Natural History Museum gave the fossil its final description. Significantly, the head region of the fossil was preserved and demonstrated that the mandageria fairfaxi had a functional neck joint—the first discovery in those types of fishes. The mandageria fairfaxi is named as such due to the Mandagery Sandstone Formation, in which it was found in 1993, as well as after Mr James Fairfax, whose kind financial support to Canowindra fish fossil research made finds such as these possible.

The naming of the mandageria fairfaxi as the State Fossil Emblem of New South Wales is just recognition for a fossil of such paleontological significance to the State and the people of New South Wales. The Division of Resources and Energy is starting a naming competition among the State's primary school students to establish a nickname for the fossil. I look forward to reporting the results of this competition back to the Parliament. Of course, I invite members of Parliament to take part in the competition—

Mr Michael Daley: Call it Bronwyn.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Call it Bronwyn. Members can participate in the competition or, indeed, name it after one of their own. I thank the people in the Division of Resources and Energy for their tireless work in driving this fantastic, innovative item. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Michael Daley and set down as an order of the day for a future day.