



State Arms, Symbols and Emblems Amendment (Fossil Emblem) Bill 2015 (Proof)

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

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Second Reading

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, and Vice-President of the Executive Council [9.11 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 members will be aware, currently there is no legislated form of State fossil emblem in New South Wales. This bill seeks to remedy that and to put in place a State fossil emblem that has special palaeontological 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 fish emblem, the blue groper; the gemstone emblem, the black opal; and, of course, our wonderful floral emblem, the waratah. The inclusion of *Mandageria fairfaxi* in New South Wales' officially recognised emblems is supported by a wide range of palaeontologists and geologists alike, such as those at the Australian Museum and the Geological Survey of NSW.

Mandageria fairfaxi roamed freshwater rivers and lakes around the State a mere 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 carrying out 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 *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 *Mandageria fairfaxi* had a functional neck joint—the first discovery in those types of fishes. *Mandageria fairfaxi* takes its name from the Mandagery sandstone formation in which it was found in 1993, as well as from Mr James Fairfax, whose kind financial support to Canowindra fish fossil research has made finds such as these possible. I take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to the Fairfax Trust on the work it continues to do in so many areas.

The naming of *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 to the Parliament. In all my years in this place this is the first time that I have seen a colour picture and a descriptor included in legislation. I am looking at the table staff, the keepers of the wisdom, and at Hansard but I cannot see anyone nodding in agreement that this has been seen before. It is the first example I have seen; that does not mean there have not been others. It is with much pleasure on behalf of the people of Canowindra in particular, who rejoice in the importance of this discovery to their community, that I commend the bill to the House.