DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

Hon Eric Abetz MP

Crown Lands (Treasury Complex) Bill 2026

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Speaker, I move that the Crown Lands (Treasury Complex) Bill 2026 now be read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to create clear title to the Treasury Complex at 21 Murray Street, Hobart.

The Treasury Complex is a distinguished collection of eight interconnected buildings with frontages to Davey, Murray and Macquarie Streets. Since 1824, the Complex has played a central role in Tasmania's judicial, political and administrative life and, under the stewardship of the Department of Treasury and Finance, it remains one of our most significant heritage precincts. The eight buildings were permanently listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register as a single comprehensive, contemporary and consolidated listing in April 2020.

A commitment in the Government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is to explore opportunities to repurpose the Treasury Complex to facilitate continued economic growth in our State, but in a way that respects its heritage and maximises public benefit.

The Treasury Complex presents a unique opportunity for an investor to take advantage of the heritage character of the buildings and their prime location. We want to showcase the heritage characteristics of the Complex and create an amazing experience that both Tasmanians and visitors can enjoy.

We have seen the stunning development at parliament square and the Tasman, which has not only preserved the heritage characteristics of the buildings, but have made them more accessible for our community.

To that end, a three-stage process was initiated: a Registration of Interest in May to June 2025, an Expression of Interest from October to December 2025, and a Request for Tender phase which commenced on 29 April 2026 and closed on 15 July 2026. A clarification and evaluation process is currently underway before an outcome can be determined over the coming months.

As the Government discovered in 2019, there is no title for the Treasury Complex. As the site has not been dealt with previously, it remains unallocated Crown Land.

While a Title may not be required, depending on the outcome of the repurposing process, it is a prudent measure to maximise the potential opportunities for the Complex.

Creation of clear Title will not only provide confidence for the proponents invited to participate in the Request for Tender stage, but it will also support effective ongoing management and planning for the site.

Importantly, title creation is also a fundamental step in ensuring proper governance and safeguarding the long-term stewardship of the Treasury Complex.

Speaker, advice received through the repurposing project and the previous divestment process confirmed that while the *Land Titles Act 1980* offers an administrative process for titling Crown land, that process is not capable of addressing the unique complexities associated with the Treasury Complex precinct. These complexities include overhanging architectural elements and the presence of historic interests that may be unclear or competing.

Legislation provides the most effective way to achieve this. It enables us to resolve longstanding historical and structural complexities, to manage title matters efficiently, and to establish mechanisms, such as easements or heritage safeguards, that are not available under existing mechanisms. It also allows us to address planning and heritage considerations in a coordinated way, consistent with the approach adopted for the parliament square precinct.

Clear title is essential for defining site boundaries; supporting responsible heritage and asset management; addressing architectural and structural features that extend beyond typical lot lines; removing outdated historical reservations; and ensuring that there are no outstanding proclamations that might constrain appropriate future use of the precinct.

While the Government has aspirations and a plan for this site, this legislation should be seen as addressing good land management and providing certainty of title irrespective of aspirations and planning.

This Bill is an important and considered step to provide clarity, support sound asset management, protect the public interest and preserve the integrity of one of Tasmania's most significant heritage sites for generations to come.

I commend the Bill to the House.