

# Operational policy

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## Easement

### Purpose

To provide guidance for granting of easements over land administered under the *Land Act 1994* (Land Act), including over reserves and unallocated state land (USL).

The policy applies to any application for a new easement over land administered under the Land Act, including over a reserve or USL, and an electricity easement over a State Forest or timber reserve, and continuation and transfer of a public utility easement.

This policy does not apply to the resumption of an easement or an omitted easement.

### Rationale

Chapter 6, Part 4, Division 8 of the Land Act provides, amongst other things, that with the Chief Executive's written approval, an easement may be created over land granted in trust and non-freehold land, other than a road, by registering the document creating the easement in the appropriate register.

An easement is a right registered on land to utilise other land (usually adjoining) in a specific manner. It may be created over freehold land, including land granted in trust under the Land Act and non-freehold land, but only for a recognised easement purpose, e.g. right of way (access), services, or for purposes associated with a public utility service such as public thoroughfare, drainage, sewerage, the supply of electricity, gas, water, etc. An easement must be registered in the appropriate register to be created. An easement may not be created over a road.

### Some purposes that are not acceptable for an easement include:

- agribusiness (grazing) that may be provided for under a lease/sublease, or
- environmental that may be provided for under a covenant.

### Note:

- An easement for access may not provide access to the public unless the easement is a public thoroughfare easement.
- A public thoroughfare easement may provide access to the public but only for pedestrians and bicycles, and vehicles reasonably necessary for the building and maintenance of the easement. The state, through any Queensland government department, can be the public utility provider for a public thoroughfare easement.

- A public utility easement for water storage (see section 362(5) of the Land Act) may be created only for water storage. Full supply level for a dam or weir means the level of the dam's or weir's water surface when water storage is at maximum operating level without being affected by flood.
  - for a weir-on land upstream of the weir and within or outside the storage area at full supply level; or
  - for a dam-on land upstream of the barrier of the dam and outside the storage area at full supply level (and for example not a private dam located on a property).

An easement usually has land burdened and benefited e.g. a person may require access to their property over their neighbour's land, or to run a water pipeline from a pump in a watercourse across their neighbour's land to supply water to their property. The land over which access is to be gained, or on which the water pipeline is to be located is the burdened land, and the land receiving the benefit of the access or water pipeline is the benefited land.

However, a public utility easement does not need land benefited, only land that is burdened by the easement e.g. easements for a power line may run over burdened lands for several kilometres providing a service (i.e. electricity) to the public (wider community) without any particular land being benefited. For provisions regarding the registration of public utility easements see section 369 of the Land Act.

The person who receives the benefit of the easement is the grantee, and the person over whose land the easement is located, is the grantor, both for a usual easement or a public utility easement.

An easement may not be for exclusive use i.e. an easement may not exclude the use by the owner of the land on which the easement is located, but the owner's use is subject to the terms of the easement.

Under section 362 of the Land Act, approval is required for an easement to be created over land granted in trust or non-freehold land (state land) other than road. Land granted in trust is a deed of grant in trust issued under the Land Act. Non-freehold land is generally a lease or occupation licence, a reserve or USL. Such approval is not required under section 390A of the Land Act for defence land or transport related land.

A trustee of a deed of grant in trust, a lessee or licensee is the owner for the purposes of granting an easement. The state represented by the Department of Resources (department) - Land Act is the owner for granting an easement over a reserve or USL, including if subject to a permit to occupy under the Land Act. If a permit to occupy is over land subject to an easement, the rights of the grantee under the easement prevail, to the extent of any inconsistency, over the occupation rights comprising the permit.

Although a state forest or timber reserve is not administered under the Land Act, in addition to Governor in Council approval, approval under the Land Act is required for an electricity easement over a state forest or timber reserve - section 116A of the *Electricity Act 1994* (Electricity Act).

**Note:** There is no provision for any other type of easement over a State Forest or timber reserve.

A public utility easement may continue when a deed of grant in trust, lease, licence, or reserve ends under section 372 of the Land Act. Under section 369A of the Land Act, a public utility easement may be transferred to a recognised public utility provider, or a person approved to provide a particular public utility service, as outlined in the policy below.

The Queensland [Land Title Practice Manual](#) provides further guidance on easements and easement purposes.

## **Policy**

### **Most appropriate location**

Allocated state land is granted or dedicated for a particular purpose and generally must be used for the purpose.

For land yet to be allocated (USL), the state needs to ensure that the granting of the easement will not diminish any future use of that land.

For trust land (i.e. deeds of grant in trust and reserves) especially, section 30 of the Land Act requires that the community purpose for which the trust land was dedicated or the land was granted in trust is not diminished by granting inappropriate interests over the trust land.

Community purposes are listed in Schedule 1 of the Land Act.

There may be safety issues when considering an access easement over trust land that is generally available for use by the public.

Trust land, particularly for a community purpose, is also for the benefit of the whole community, and not for one person.

The person who requires the easement will need to demonstrate (and the department determine) that the state land is the most appropriate location for the required easement.

However, access easements are not to be granted over trust land for recreation or any other trust land used by the public where public safety might be affected.

Further, an easement will not be considered over community purposes trust land to provide additional access to private land that already has dedicated access.

### **Public utility easement**

To be able to be granted (or transferred) a public utility easement, the grantee needs to be a public utility provider.

A public utility provider is defined under Schedule 6 Definitions of the Land Act.

If a person who proposes to provide a service is not a recognised public utility provider, e.g. the state, a local government, an electricity entity (i.e. Powerlink, Energex or Ergon), a telecommunications carrier (e.g. Telstra), the person may seek approval to be considered as a public utility provider for a particular public utility service (for public utility service, see section 369 of the Land Act).

A public utility provider must provide the particular service to the public i.e. the wider community.

A public utility easement may only be granted or transferred to a public utility provider.

If a person is seeking approval to provide a particular public utility service i.e. to be a public utility provider, the person will need to supply evidence to the department that:

- the person has the authority to provide the service e.g. a special approval under the Electricity Act for the supply of electricity, or a pipeline licence under the *Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004* for the supply of gas, or the person is authorised under the *Water Act 2000* to supply water; and
- the service is being provided to the public i.e. the wider community.

If the service is not being provided to the wider community, approval is unable to be given to a person to be a public utility provider e.g.

- a mining company may have special approval under the Electricity Act to supply electricity to its mine, however, as that supply is only for a private purpose, and not to the wider community, the mining company would be unable to be approved as a public utility provider; or
- if water is being supplied to a number of landowners under a private agreement between those land owners, again as the supply is only for private purposes, approval would be unable to be given for those owners to be a public utility provider.

and a usual easement i.e. land being burdened and benefited will be required.

## **No exclusive use**

An easement may not provide for exclusive use.

The state does not wish to diminish the purpose for which land is granted or dedicated.

An easement is unable to provide for exclusive use e.g. an easement may not be granted for an electricity substation, or a compressor station for a gas pipeline. Infrastructure of this nature would need to be located on land which provides exclusive use, such as freehold.

The department's preferred position is such infrastructure is to be located on land other than state land i.e. the department would prefer where possible not to excise any area from existing state land, particularly trust land, for the issue of an appropriate tenure for the infrastructure, as the excision may diminish the use of that state land.

## **Easement over a state lease over a reserve**

If a lease under the Land Act has issued over a reserve (a state lease), generally the state is unable to enter into an easement agreement over the underlying reserve.

The only exemption that may be considered is if the state lease is for grazing purposes only, as a grazing lease, particularly over a reserve, is considered as a non-exclusive lease.

Only an electricity easement may be considered over a state forest or timber reserve.

Once an easement has either be granted or resumed over a state lease, a similar easement may be considered over the underlying reserve but only if the state lease is for grazing purposes.

The above may also apply for an electricity easement over a state forest or timber reserve (subject to a state lease for grazing) provided the Department of Environment and Science is consulted and the Governor in Council's approval to the easement is firstly obtained.

**Note:** Only an electricity easement is to be considered over a state lease issued over a state forest or timber reserve as the land is still state forest or timber reserve (only an electricity easement may be granted over these lands).

## **Conditions on which an easement may be granted**

The chief executive's approval will require that the easement contain conditions that will protect the state's interest. The state as any owner is entitled to fair payment when granting an easement.

Conditions for the grant of any easement over state land will include the following:

1. The grantee must indemnify the state, and the lessee, licensee or trustee as applicable against all actions.
2. Public liability insurance must be provided.
3. Provision must be made for the removal of any of the grantees above ground infrastructure and improvements when the easement is terminated or is no longer required.
  - a. For safety reasons, above grounds infrastructure and improvements include to at least a depth of 61 cm (2 feet) below the surface of the ground e.g. that part of a pipeline that may rise to the surface for a safety inspection point.
  - b. Below ground infrastructure and improvements may generally remain in the ground if there is no likelihood of environmental harm or contamination unless other legislation deals with removal of the specific infrastructure and improvements.

Neither the grant of the easement nor any condition therein is to impose a cost to the state.

The easement is to only contain clauses that relate to the relationship between the grantor (if not the department) and grantee, and should not attempt to bind the state.

In addition to the above requirements, for an easement over a reserve or USL, the following requirements also apply

1. Easements are to be granted only on some suitable consideration.
2. The easement is to carry a clause appointing the state as grantor as the attorney of the grantee to effect a surrender of the easement upon the default of the grantee of any condition, covenant or clause, or if applicable, on termination of the pipeline licence or other similar authorities e.g. special approval under the Electricity Act.

If over a reserve, the consent of the trustee to the easement will also be required.

## **Continuing easements**

An easement over land granted in trust, a lease, a licence or a reserve ends when the deed of grant in trust, lease or licence ends or the dedication of the reserve is revoked.

However, with the Minister's written approval, a public utility easement may only continue over unallocated state land when the deed of grant in trust, lease or licence ends or the dedication of the reserve is revoked.

A public utility easement may continue with the Minister's approval but a condition of the approval may include that the terms and conditions of the easement are to be amended to include the department's requirements to ensure the objects of this policy are satisfied. With the Minister's written approval, a public utility easement that burdens a state lease over a reserve may continue over the reserve when the state lease ends.

## Legislation

*Electricity Act 1994*

*Land Act 1994*

*Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004*

*Water Act 2000*

## Related documents

Guideline – [Dealings \(including compensation\) with easements \(SLM/2013/419 = PUX/952/072\)](#)

Guideline – [Roads under the Land Act 1994 \(SLM/2013/725 = PUX/952/122\)](#)

Land Title Practice Manual

## Human Rights

The department is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, the department has an obligation to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights. To the extent an act or decision under this document may engage human rights under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, regard will be had to that Act in undertaking the act or making the decision.

## Approval

| Position                  | Name          | Effective Date |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| A/Director, Land Services | Roslyn Hooper | 26 Aug 2019    |

## Version history

| Version | Date       | Comments   |
|---------|------------|--|
| 1       | 28/05/1999 | Endorsed   |
| 1.1     | 01/07/2005 | Conversion Project – New WORD/XML template   |
| 2       | 13/12/2007 | Updated to reflect Land Act amendments. Endorsed by Scott Spencer, Director-General, Department of Natural Resources and Water |

|      |            |   |
|------|------------|---|
| 2.1  | 15/10/2008 | Minor amendment to omit the Sugar Industry Act no longer relevant |
| 2.2  | 08/02/2011 | Minor updates to reflect departmental name change to DERM         |
| 2.3  | 25/10/2012 | Minor updates to reflect departmental name change to DNRM         |
| 2.04 | 19/03/2014 | Minor updates to reflect departmental name change to DNRM         |
| 2.05 | 21/06/2016 | Minor amendment to review and insert text on new template         |
| 3.00 | 28/07/2017 | Minor updates to reflect the LOLA 2017 amendments                 |
| 3.01 | 26/08/2019 | Updated to reflect change in decision making responsibility.      |
| 3.02 | 14/06/2022 | Updated template and department name to Department of Resources   |
| 3.03 | 01/03/2023 | Updated to include amendments due to LOLA 2023                    |
| 3.04 | 29/11/2023 | Minor correction to condition depth measurement                   |

## Further information

- Contact your nearest business centre ([https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/?contact=state\\_land](https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/?contact=state_land)), or
- Refer to <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/state>, or
- Call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

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