




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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MINERAL RESOURCES (GALILEE BASIN) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (12.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to stop coal mining in the Galilee Basin. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018 [\[1771\]](#).

Tabled paper: Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018, explanatory notes [\[1772\]](#).

I have taken every opportunity available to me in this place to speak to the looming climate catastrophe. It was only last sitting week that I addressed the IPCC's latest report, which lays bare that we must stop burning coal for power by 2050. I put it to the minister in question time last sitting week. I asked the minister again in question time this morning whether he and the government will accept the science and stop thermal coalmining for export. The silence in response has been deafening. The government's response is to keep quiet about the Galilee Basin and Adani and simply point to the progress that is being made on renewables. Let me be clear again: a renewables policy alongside ongoing expansion of thermal coalmining into the Galilee basin is futile. This bill proposes action, in line with the best available science, where the government has continually failed Queenslanders and the climate.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report on 1.5 degrees of global warming is a shocking wake-up call. It is the reason I am introducing this bill today. The Summary for Policymakers attached to the report notes that by 2050—

... the use of coal shows a steep reduction in all pathways and would be reduced to close to 0 per cent (0-2 per cent) of electricity ...

That finding is made with high confidence, which is an important point. It is perhaps more important to emphasise that this finding relates to all pathways modelled in the report. That means that without pie-in-the-sky solutions like carbon capture and storage, there is no other option. If we do not keep global warming below 1.5 degrees, the scientific consensus is now stronger than ever that we will face more intense droughts, bushfires, starvation across much of the world, mass migration, more severe wars and conflict, and the collapse of entire ecosystems, including the total disappearance of the Great Barrier Reef. That means Adani and the Galilee Basin mines can never, ever be built. It means phasing out all thermal coal exports and shutting down coal-fired power stations.

Instead of ending all thermal coal by 2050, Adani and the other Galilee Basin mines are planned to run until 2080 or beyond. They will put our homes, farms, forests and reefs in the danger zone. We do not have the time or money to waste on dead-end projects like opening up new coalmines. Jim Skea, co-chair of the IPCC Working Group III stated—

Limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible within the laws of chemistry and physics but doing so would require unprecedented changes.

As a society, all our efforts should be focused on a war-footing mobilisation to create a fairer, cleaner world and fight climate change in the process. It is time to hit the climate emergency button. We need a planned, jobs-rich transition away from existing coalmines. Opening up massive new coalmines is now out of the question. The picture is much clearer: this coal needs to stay in the ground.

In his non-response to my question this morning, the mines minister spoke about a just transition into a new renewable economy. No truly just transition can be planned alongside ongoing development of white elephant projects like those proposed in the Galilee. No serious investors with a long-term vision are pursuing these mines. They are all cowboys: Clive Palmer, Adani and their ilk. Serious operators like BHP and Rio Tinto—even Gina Rinehart—have all abandoned their interests in the Galilee, yet the government maintains the charade. We keep hearing from the Premier and Labor members that Adani needs to stack up financially and environmentally. If only I had a dollar for every time I have heard that. It has always been a weak position and it is deliberately framed to give them a foot in each camp: to appease their donor mates in the resource lobby and at the same time quieten those in their own ranks who are quite rightly opposed to the expansion of thermal coalmining into the Galilee Basin.

Nobody can now maintain, in light of the IPCC report, that new coalmines, proposed to operate until late in this century, stack up environmentally or economically. Ongoing thermal coalmine expansion is fundamentally inconsistent with international climate change targets. It is a death sentence for the living Great Barrier Reef. It means this state, which is already so exposed to natural disasters, will see more frequent or intense droughts, floods, storms and cyclones.

Queensland's laws do not allow consideration of the climate change impacts of these projects that produce thermal coal for export. I have worked on cases in the Queensland Court of Appeal, the highest court in the state. That court has said that our law is incapable of accounting for these global impacts. Quite simply, the fact that Galilee coal does not stack up environmentally has slipped through the cracks in our hopelessly weak environmental protection laws. It is time to just drop it. It is time for the government to be honest with Queenslanders, with those communities being led on by the prospect of Adani getting off the ground, let alone providing long-term economic stability for the regions.

My bill would amend the Mineral Resources Act to stop all coalmining in the Galilee Basin. It would:

- prohibit the grant of a coalmining lease for land in the Galilee Basin;
- terminate any existing coalmining leases for land in the Galilee Basin—Adani's mining lease, for example;
- amend any existing coalmining leases that overlap land in the Galilee Basin to exclude that land;
- confirm that no compensation is payable to the mining leaseholders affected by the bill; and
- require the mines minister to table a report in the Legislative Assembly summarising the actions taken under the provisions of the bill.

The Treasurer confirmed in estimates this year that royalties from the Galilee Basin coalmines have not been factored into the budget forecasts. That means this bill will not change Queensland's revenue in the budget one iota.

Mr Power: Outside four years.

Mr BERKMAN: I will take that interjection from the member for Logan: outside four years. Are we going to start it beyond four years? What about the next 40 years, mate?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Through the chair.

Mr BERKMAN: My apologies, Mr Deputy Speaker. When unconstrained by time limits it is difficult to keep oneself in check when hearing this kind of nonsense and the unwillingness on the part of members on either side of this House to engage with climate change, to see it for what it is and take it seriously. It is almost disappointing that I do not have some of the more vocal dinosaurs on the opposition side of the House giving me some flack. I would quite have enjoyed it. I digress.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BERKMAN: As we transition away from thermal coalmining and power stations we need to raise mining royalties on existing coalmines to help fund a just transition for workers and communities.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BERKMAN: I cannot even hear the interjections. Come on! In some ways this is a drastic piece of legislation. It takes away the rights of massive mining companies and rips up Adani's existing mining lease. Our position is that the bill does not meet the generally accepted definition of 'acquisition of property' since nothing is being acquired. Still, it is a bold step. This step is completely justified in the face of the overwhelming risk to human safety and the risk of catastrophic global warming without immediate action.

Companies involved in these projects have been on notice for many years about the risks and the long-term need to phase out thermal coalmining. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change dates back to 1992. Almost 25 years of science and work by people across the world led to the Paris Agreement in 2015. The future of our civilisation is at stake. If you are trying to build a coalmine in 2018, you have been warned. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Mr BERKMAN (Maiwar—Grn) (12.39 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee.