

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000 .

Submitted by email to: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

30th March 2016

SUBJECT: *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016.*

Please accept this submission to the legislative amendments proposed in the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016.*

There is a huge and costly bill emerging that concerns approximately 15,000 (fifteen thousand) unrehabilitated and or abandoned mine sites across Queensland.

I applaud the Queensland governments move to ensure that the companies and individuals who have profited from mining in this State are to be held accountable and pay the bill for the cleanup of their operations. If mining companies go bankrupt or fold into other entities, change names or use other devious mechanisms to hide corporate and/or individual responsibility for the environmental damage the company's operations have caused, there must be legislation in place that ensures those individuals are held responsible and pay for the rehabilitation costs.

It is timely to remind all members of the Queensland government that they signed and agreed to the Fitzgerald principles publicised in early 2015 and made commitments to accountability, transparency and good government. This matter falls right at the feet of accountability and good government.

It is not right or just that Queensland tax payers should be left to pay such a massive cost when they have already paid to subsidise the operations of these companies, paid to have their common heritage (water , land and air) damaged and/or destroyed, and paid with the lives and health of many people.

The Queensland Government has my full support for the proposed legislative amendments in the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016* . I commend the Government

and Minister for acknowledging the growing problem concerning mine sites and rehabilitation and taking action.

The land of this State is in some areas so damaged and contaminated, for example the legacy of the Linc and Cougar underground coal gasification projects, that no one knows as far as I am aware, how to remediate the damage and how much it will cost. The companies and owners of these companies must be held responsible and pay any costs the Queensland government and or affected landholders in those areas are faced with, now and into the future until the problems are satisfactorily addressed and solved.

There is an unfolding environmental catastrophe in areas that have been mined for coal seam gas and /or shale gas (unconventional gas). This includes literally mountains of salt that nobody seems to know what to do with, contaminated and or depleted ground water and the disposal or reuse of 'produced' water . These are just a few of the problems known to be a result of unconventional gas mining.

Currently the government's position appears to be that it is all ok in the gasfields. But there is plenty of evidence both here in Queensland and from other regions around the world where these mining operations cause damage to thousands and thousands of square kilometres of land , the environment and denigrate water supplies.

You would have to be deaf and blind to not know the financial trouble that the unconventional gas and coal mining companies across Australia and around the world now find themselves in. Some of the world's largest mining companies have gone into administration and there are many more to follow. Santos and Origin Energy are in huge financial trouble as I write. The poor management decisions undertaken by these companies should not be the responsibility of government or tax payers. It is the responsibility of the people who are or were running and directing the company and the shareholders who supported those poor business decisions. The financial situation these companies are facing makes the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016* necessary and urgent.

It is common knowledge that mining companies are notorious for not paying tax.

It is common knowledge that mining companies have a poor track record when it comes to the environment. (The list too long to include here, but can be provided should the Committee require it).

It is common knowledge that the individuals working for and making money from mining have demonstrated that they walk away from their responsibility concerning mine rehabilitation and

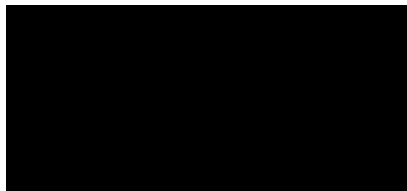
environmental consequences. 15,000 abandoned mine sites across Queensland should be enough evidence.

To be absolutely clear, if the company responsible for the mining project no longer exists or has gone bankrupt then individuals who have held positions in those companies that have, over the life of a mine or mining operation, be it coal, nickle, lead, copper, silver, gold mines or unconventional gas mines, must be held accountable and pay for the costs of rehabilitation. If the individual is no longer with the company, that should not allow for them to be free of the consequences of their actions.

It is only right and just that any organisation, company, entity or individual pays for the mess that their activities make. Mining sites must be returned to a condition that is a close as possible to how it was before the project/s. Mining companies have had a marvelous time in Queensland accessing once only available resources (public assets) and a great ride making massive profits over decades of mining in this State. If mining companies and individuals have ignored the fact that there was a bill attached to cleaning up after the project/s then that simply amounts to ignorance, gross negligence and a complete lack of sound business practise on their part. This is not the tax payers problem, it is squarely the mining companies and individuals from those companies problem to solve.

To reiterate, I fully support the proposed legislative amendments in the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016*.

Your sincerely,



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