



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Hansard 22 October 1998

GORDONSTONE MINE

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (7.28 p.m.): I note yesterday's announcement that Rio Tinto has bought the majority stake in the Gordonstone mine, which is in the Fitzroy electorate north-east of Emerald. As members would be aware, for over 12 months the Gordonstone mine has been closed by its owners, Arco Coal, because of its inability to reach an agreement with its work force. As the mineworkers' representative in this place, I am keen to see Gordonstone back on line producing coal. I want to see mineworkers back at the coalface. Therefore, I encourage the new owners and the unions to sit down at the table and talk through the issues.

I am very much aware of both sides of the argument and the principles at stake. Only the parties involved have the credentials to talk through those issues. However, as the State member of the Queensland electoral district in which Gordonstone sits, I wish to make myself available if and when required to assist the unions and Rio Tinto's Queensland subsidiary,

Pacific Coal Management. If I can help in getting miners back on the job, I am prepared to give it my best shot. That is my role. I do not want to butt in, but if I can be of any assistance to either of the parties, I am only too happy to do so. The economy needs jobs and the workers in the area have the expertise and the commitment to get on with the job. I believe that with the right commitment, good faith and goodwill, we can get Gordonstone operating again.

The company's managing director was right when he said, according to today's Courier-Mail, "We have to hire the best people." Gordonstone's world record breaking production figures demonstrate the ability and expertise of the mine's available work force. It is time for coal producers to stop the billion dollar expenditure on expertise. It takes years for workers to gain all the skills that are required and our mineworkers have those skills and commitment. I say to the company: take advantage of the dollars invested in those workers and get on with the job.
