



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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MINING EXPLORATION PERMITS

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.22 a.m.): In August a group of geoscientists sought my help to petition the Beattie Government about mining exploration permits and the new Native Title Act. Some of that petition was tabled on Tuesday in this House. I now table the hundreds of additional signatures from the mining explorers.

The mining industry has been battling low commodity prices since the Asian economic crisis began, and perhaps even beforehand. In fact, for a number of years a fall in real prices has been occurring in the export area. However, section 482(e) of the Native Title (Queensland) State Provisions Amendment Act has practical implications that will have disastrous consequences for the industry. It requires miners to secure high-impact exploration permits to take their portable equipment onto land under native title claim, because the definition of "low-impact exploration" is not realistic in practice. This is a time—

Mr Elder: How are you going to change it?

Dr WATSON: I heard the Minister say that the other day. I will make a deal with him: if the Minister can get Beazley to get it past the Senate, I will go with him to front John Howard personally in a bipartisan manner to get this section changed, if that is what he wants. I make that offer.

The industry needs a sympathetic hearing, because the laws that are in place are costly both in terms of time and money. Miners are going to have to negotiate access and compensation payments with native title owners before they drill a single hole. This could delay the process by up to nine months and push overheads through the roof without any guarantee of a positive outcome. Miners have to drill about 3,000 holes to find a viable deposit. They need the portable equipment and they need access to land to get that equipment on the land. They cannot use existing roads or tracks to get to isolated sites. We have about 80 highly qualified geoscientists—

Time expired.
