



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee E
Report**

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (11.45 a.m.): Estimates Committee E heard from the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Minister for Health, and in the time available to me I will restrict my comments to the portfolio of the Minister for Mines and Energy.

The appropriation for the Department of Mines and Energy is a budget of \$333.122m for the 1999-2000 financial year. I want to look at what is happening in the mining industry under the Mines and Energy portfolio. It will be no surprise to honourable members that I will start with the Queensland coal industry. I wish to advise the House that Queensland's coal production increased by some 7% in 1998-99, and exports increased to a record 85 million tonnes. This confirms that coal is the world's most economical source of energy, and we can expect coal exports to increase over the coming years.

The Queensland Government is also supporting investigations into clean coal technologies. The Department of Mines and Energy contributes funds to the Cooperative Research Centre for Black Coal Utilisation, the Coal Utilisation Research Unit at the University of Queensland and the CSIRO coal classification research facility at the Queensland Centre for Advanced Technologies. In addition, the Government's QTHERM coal promotion program provides technical information demonstrating the attractive environmental and superior utilisation properties of Queensland coal for the world's markets.

The Government is dedicated to doing everything possible to assist exploration and development in Queensland and, as a consequence, the Government has developed an \$8m initiative to promote exploration in this State. The exploration initiative, about which the member for Kallangur has already spoken, will concentrate on creating more effective and efficient means of capturing and maintaining geoscientific information and producing geoscientific information products which meet the needs of the resource sector. The initiative also incorporates the production of general promotional information and the development of strategies to promote the State's mineral prospectivity and investment potential.

The Queensland Government is also committed to introducing policies which will ensure that Queensland is not simply seen as a quarry where companies dig minerals out of the ground and export them overseas in their raw state. A Government working group is currently developing a policy framework to encourage further value adding to minerals in Queensland, as well as listing a range of project development opportunities aimed to attract further investment and employment into the industry sector.

The Carpentaria-Mount Isa Mineral Province study, established by the Goss Government in 1992, was successful in paving the way for investment of more than \$3.5 billion in the State's northern region. The study facilitated the creation of over 2,000 direct permanent new jobs and around 6,000 to 8,000 indirect jobs in associated industries. The current Queensland Government wants to build on the enormous success of that initiative through its north-west Queensland development initiative. The project aims to identify and evaluate further economic development opportunities for indigenous and non-indigenous employment by helping to facilitate, for example, new business and enterprise development, mining and mining services, as well as tourism and agribusiness.

Access to land for exploration for mining is critical. In this regard, the key issue is the introduction of practical native title legislation. This Government has taken the initiative to introduce a comprehensive package of legislation to get explorers and miners back on the ground in Queensland. We are now dependent upon Commonwealth approval of the alternative State provisions to the right to negotiate. I am hopeful that this will occur in early 2000.

There has been some criticism by elements of the exploration industry that the alternative State provisions are too complex for exploration and that they will discourage investment. The provisions are constrained by the Commonwealth legislation, but they do provide for reconnaissance exploration activities, including most drilling, to proceed relatively simply. The provisions give—

Time expired.
