



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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MINING

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.17 a.m.): Small miners in north Queensland, and in fact throughout the State, are struggling for survival and were not impressed by the refusal of the Premier for low interest finance. They await the tortuous process of his native title legislation. They have met with a flat refusal from the Premier to support them during this period of being denied the right to carry out their businesses. They have received a just-around-the-corner solution to their difficulties. Parallels are drawn with low interest funds that are provided due to the impact of natural disasters which Government recognises.

Their machinery is rusting as the period of uncertainty continues and debts continue to grow. People are being made redundant as the existing leases of the ore bodies expire. The suppliers of goods and services to the mining industry are not receiving orders for equipment, fuel, spare parts and general services. Unlike the big mining companies, a significant part of the income of the bodies and those who work for them is spent in local communities. Those communities have been in a state of limbo for three years as their future is yet to be decided, yet small miners made a meaningful contribution to the economy when they had access to the previous mining tenures.

These people are not looking for hand-outs. They are desperately in need of help, which is being refused by the Premier. They are being forced to sell off pieces of equipment, often at fire sale prices, to sustain their families. In the future they will have to deal with not only the rigours of native title but also the double whammy of the environmental issues under the Department of Mines and Energy as the responsibility is transferred to the Environmental Protection Agency, with its stable of radical green activists.
