



Speech by

**Hon. T. McGRADY**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

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Hansard 9 June 1999

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Century Mine Project**

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of progress with the Century mine project. This massive project is taking shape rapidly, and I believe it is on track for first production during the third quarter of this year. Full production is targeted for early next year. Once fully operational, this mine will have an annual production of about 5 million tonnes of ore. This equates to about 30% of Australia's zinc production and 8% of the Western World's. Some of the major components, such as the concentrator and the crusher, are being commissioned right now.

The pit itself has exposed the top of the ore body. At this stage the pit is about 800 metres by 600 metres, and when it is in full operation it will grow to about double that size. I am told that the amount of material being removed from the mine every day would fill the Melbourne Cricket Ground to a depth of three metres. It is obviously a massive project.

I am pleased to say that safety on the site has been good and performance by the construction work force has been the major contributor to this achievement. As everybody in this House would be well aware, safety has to be paramount in these types of projects. So I commend the work force and the company for their performance. I am also pleased to say that the NORQEB transmission line to the site is going well. Stringing of the lines started on 1 May, with the wires being run out by helicopter. The final towers are being put into place and I have been assured that the line will be commissioned and ready for duty by 1 August, as promised. It is obviously a project to be proud of. This will be the biggest zinc mine in the world. However, success can be measured in a number of ways. I believe that one of the biggest successes of this project is the way it has succeeded at community partnerships. There are some very real and practical benefits flowing from this mine to the local communities, particularly in the form of training and jobs.

When I visited the mine recently I spoke with trainees and workers from right throughout the north. They are all working on the project and they place great value on the opportunities presented by it. I am told that there are more than 160 employees of Aboriginal descent currently working at the Century mine. Most of them come from areas of low employment. The company assures me that it is working hard to ensure this situation continues and I commend it for that. I have been involved with this project in many ways over the past 10 years. There is an old saying that you might lose the battle but you win the war. I submit that that saying is appropriate in this case.

In conclusion, there must be a tremendous sense of pride on the part of those members of the communities, particularly the women, who realised that it is projects such as this that can bring training and employment to their people in areas of almost total unemployment. My congratulations go out to all of those people who fought the hard fight and won.

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