



Speech by

**Dr DAVID WATSON**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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Hansard 8 September 2000

### **NATIVE TITLE RESOLUTION BILL**

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.04 a.m.): I also rise to oppose the Native Title Resolution Bill. In 50 years' time, when historians look back and try to locate the exact date that spelled the beginning of the end of mining investment in Queensland, this will be the day they settle on. And in 50 years' time, when historians look back and try to identify the one major piece of legislation that put an end to employment opportunities for Aboriginals in remote areas of Queensland, that will be this piece of legislation.

The Premier likes to talk about jobs, jobs, jobs so let us talk about jobs, jobs, jobs. This Bill is a jobs destroyer. This Bill says to mining companies, "Go elsewhere." This Bill says to anyone who makes a living in the mining industry, "We're going to make it damned hard for you in Queensland." The other day I heard what was supposed to be a joke: what's the difference between a Queensland geologist and a pizza? A pizza can feed a family of four! That is not very funny.

Investment in mining in this country is already on very shaky ground. A recent world risk survey of the resources industry rated 20 countries that are the major players in minerals prospecting. Do honourable members know where Australia rated for land access? Twentieth! We finished last on the world league table when it came to risk in relation to land access. And now Labor has erected another barrier to land access.

Last week in Canberra, Federal Labor completely gutted the Queensland native title regime by abandoning the proposed section 43A alternative provisions to the right to negotiate. There is not much left that enables workable procedures to operate in Queensland. It is worth repeating, as the Leader of the Opposition hinted at a moment ago, that the coalition did support in this place the Queensland native title legislation. We had reservations about it. We did not think it went far enough. It is also important to realise that the Federal coalition Government also supported that piece of legislation. But now, with the recent amendments made in the Senate, all of that has been thrown out the window. Now all mining applications on pastoral leases in Queensland essentially will have to run the gauntlet of the full right to negotiate process. Perhaps Labor, particularly Federal Labor, has forgotten this: the right to negotiate was never designed to apply to pastoral leases.

A fundamental fact with respect to Keating's original 1993 Mabo legislation, which Labor now likes to try to ignore, is that it was based on the then clear legal position that native title was extinguished by pastoral leases. Admittedly, that was modified in the Wik decision. The whole foundation of the original legislation was that this right to negotiate process would never apply to mining applications on pastoral leases. We have gone a long way backwards since then.

What a joke it was when Daryl Melham resigned as Labor's shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs! He supposedly resigned on principle. What principle? The principle of being famous for 15 minutes? He certainly did not need to resign over anything that was left in the Bill. Laurie Oakes was spot on in the Bulletin when he said that—

"... Beattie should be very grateful to Melham, whose resignation made it look as though it was the Queensland premier who'd won a victory."

The Leader of the Opposition read other excerpts from that Laurie Oakes article a moment ago. The real winner out of the Senate negotiations and amendments was not the Queensland Premier, it was

the Opposition Leader in Canberra. They were the ones who effectively gutted the Queensland legislation. Any of the odium from the dismantling of the Queensland legislation falls on their shoulders.

This Bill is a defeat for mining investment, for indigenous job prospects and for Queensland. In recent times the Premier has come out in full support of Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson and his efforts to end the so-called poison of Aboriginal welfare. I would have thought the best way to end the poison of Aboriginal welfare was jobs. And where are jobs for indigenous Queenslanders most likely to be? On mining sites in remote areas! The Premier knows that. In a letter to the editor of the Courier-Mail of 20 April this year, Peter Beattie wrote—

"I am passionate about jobs resulting from mining development which benefits all Queenslanders, and particularly indigenous Queenslanders. Unless there is mining exploration and mining then indigenous Queenslanders in remote communities will not benefit."

Exactly! Unless there is mining exploration and mining, then indigenous Queenslanders in remote communities will not benefit. Federal Labor's logic in voting with the Democrats to water down the Queensland native title regime defies understanding. Was it doing it to protect indigenous Australians? As my colleague from Mooloolah has said, the best protection we can give indigenous Australians is a job. Is there anyone in this House who would disagree with that? It is working very well at the Centenary zinc mine in north-west Queensland.

**Mr Lucas:** "Century" actually, not "Centenary".

**Dr WATSON:** Century Zinc mine.

**Mr Lucas:** You said "Centenary".

**Dr WATSON:** I must have been thinking about the next electorate we are going to win away from Labor.

It is working very well at the Century Zinc mine in north-west Queensland. I remember just last month at the Estimates committee that Mr Braddy, the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, sang the praises of Century in terms of creating employment for indigenous Australians. Under an MOU signed with Pasminco, by 2003, 50% of the work force at Century Zinc will be indigenous people drawn from the communities in that part of the world. Pasminco tells us that already 20% of the workers are Aboriginal. As Mr Braddy said, we can create meaningful trained jobs for the Aboriginal community of this State, but not any more thanks to the sell-out by the Premier and his Labor mates in Canberra.

**Mr Sullivan:** That is rubbish, David, and you know it—absolute rubbish!

**Dr WATSON:** The member opposite and I know that no-one wants this Bill. He did not want this Bill and he knows it. We did not want this Bill. The coalition in Canberra did not want this Bill. We wanted the Bill that was passed by this Parliament, which was flawed, but he and his Labor mates in Canberra sold out. Mining companies do not win. Aborigines do not win. Queensland does not win. We oppose this Bill on what is a very sad day in the history of our State.

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