



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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MINING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.48 p.m.): I have much pleasure in informing the House that the Opposition will be supporting this piece of legislation, the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to take this opportunity to make some comments about the mining industry, which is very important to Queensland. I note that a couple of days ago in this House the Minister made the comment that he had received his first question from me concerning this portfolio. There are a large number of issues involved in the mining industry about which I, as the Opposition spokesman for Mines and Energy, would welcome the opportunity to question the Minister.

The fact that we have had very limited opportunity to ask questions this year, given the shortness of the parliamentary sittings, should not be construed in any way as though we are not understanding of those issues. We are going to take every opportunity that presents itself to pursue those issues. There are some very important issues that are threatening the mining industry. There are some very big issues which the Minister, as the man ultimately responsible for the future of the mining industry in Queensland, should be doing his best to resolve.

This legislation seems to be precisely as the Minister described in his second-reading speech. He described it as a series of minor and non-controversial amendments with the intention of streamlining the administration of what appears to be an excellently developing industry-based superannuation scheme clearly sound enough to cope with non-contributions by either employers or employees during periods of unpaid leave. The scheme seems to ensure consistency between several pieces of safety legislation debated in this House late last year. I will not take the time of the House today to repeat much of the debate that occurred when that legislation passed through the House. However, it is sufficient for me to say that the opinions we expressed during that debate are still widely and strongly held by the Opposition and by large sections of the mining industry.

This legislation also provides a simple extension of time for the drawing up of a regulation under the Explosives Act. The fact that there has to be an extension of time for the drawing up of that regulation is in itself something of a concern. However, we have been informed during briefings on this legislation that that regulation has been completed and is simply awaiting drafting. We can only hope that efficiency of Government processes are such that in future regulations do not need to wait a full year to be drafted and put into practice.

However, as I said, I want to take the opportunity today to make a few comments about the mining industry, because the opportunities to do so in the parliamentary process this year have been fairly limited. We have had a fairly limited opportunity to make comments about the mining industry and a fairly limited opportunity to ask questions about the many issues that are very relevant to the mining industry. Many of those issues are of sufficient importance as to be seen by some to be threatening the very future of the mining industry.

Who would have thought that in a State such as Queensland, whose economy has for many years depended upon the mining industry—a State in which so many people and communities depend on the industry for their employment and their economic base—there are people in the mining industry who are quite legitimately questioning whether or not the mining industry has a future. We have certainly come a long way from the halcyon days of the mining industry, remembering the contribution it has made and the importance and esteem in which it was held within the Queensland community. It

still makes a huge contribution economically, but the level of esteem with which the mining industry should rightly be held is unfortunately falling.

I refer the House to a speech made by Dr Chris Rawlings, the President of the Queensland Mining Council. I hope the Minister has a copy of this speech. At the conclusion of my remarks I will table it. I am sure the Minister has seen it. It is cause for concern for anybody who has any sort of interest in the mining industry that a person of Dr Rawlings' stature should be asked to make a speech to the Townsville Chamber of Commerce to address the question of whether there is a future for the Queensland mining industry. Dr Rawlings was asked to make some comment about whether or not the resources sector as such faced extinction. He said—

"To those of you in the north, such questions probably seem absurd, particularly at this time of announcement of major resource based projects."

There have been a number of major projects announced in the north and a number of major projects brought to fruition. But the lead time involved in bringing those major projects to fruition should be obvious to all of us. The point is that, while those projects are operating now, there is a gap, a lag. There are no projects in the early stages of development. That is what is threatening the very future of the industry. Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"I can assure you that, in capital cities, both in Australia and overseas, such sentiments are being expressed. Sadly, they are expressed even more regularly in the corridors of bureaucratic power in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne.

The time lines may vary. Some talk a decade, others talk longer. But there are many people in this country either convinced mining is a sunset industry or would like it to be. The major mining service centres, such as Townsville, have good reason to be concerned, if these sentiments continue to shape public debate and legislation."

Dr Rawlings went on to say further—

"The nature of public debate in recent times has focused on restraint of development on environmental, native title and cultural heritage grounds. The areas provide passionate, but often not well informed debate, about the true worth of controlled development to our society."

How right he is. Those three areas— environmental, native title and cultural heritage—are renowned, in my opinion. They are unique in that they have been characterised by emotive, passionate debate that has been very short on scientific basis. That debate has been very ill informed. It behoves those who take advantage of the power they can engender from the media to be responsible when debating those issues, to be aware of the impact that emotive debate on those issues can have on the Queensland mining industry and to be aware of the effect that the overuse of emotion in those types of debates can have on the whole Queensland economy.

Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"Australia is developing a public environment, where the emotion relating to these issues carries greater weight than do the positive social benefits of increased employment, high quality infrastructure, regional development and economic growth."

I believe that that is the crux of the matter. There needs to be a balance struck between the areas of environmental, native title and cultural heritage. They are the three big obstacles that the mining industry must face. They are the three big obstacles that any mining project must face. To many people, they are hurdles that projects cannot get over. There needs to be a balance between those three areas and the other things that are important in our community, that is, the positive social benefits, the increased employment, the high-quality infrastructure and regional development and economic growth. There needs to be a balance between those competing issues.

I contend that at present the Queensland mining industry is out of balance. I contend that the pendulum has been pushed too far towards the emotive consideration of environmental, native title and cultural heritage issues at the expense of those positive social benefits, that is, the increased employment that mining can bring, the high-quality infrastructure that mining brings to rural and remote areas of Queensland and the regional development and economic growth that mining brings and has brought to large areas of Queensland over a long time. The State's mining industry is out of balance with respect to these competing interests. The pendulum has swung too far. That balance must be corrected.

Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"The mining industry has responded to the challenges put up by these and other issues by taking account of the social and environmental impacts in development proposals."

They have. If we look at the work being done now in those areas by any mining project, right from day one a huge amount of effort is made to take account of the social and environmental impacts.

Mr Pearce: They used to. They don't now. They don't care any more.

Mr SEENEY: I take the interjection from the member for Fitzroy. If we look at the difference in the process of establishing a mining project now to what it was 10, 15 or 20 years ago, the amount of work done to analyse and understand the environmental and social impacts is huge. However, we are never going to reach a point where those impacts are negligible. We have to accept that any major project is going to have an impact. The decision we need to make is whether those impacts are warranted to obtain the positive social benefits, that is, the increased employment and the economic development. We cannot have one without the other. We cannot have those types of positive benefits in the Queensland economy without having some environmental and social impacts. All of us would agree that those impacts have to be minimised. All of us would agree that we need to do these things as well as we can with a minimum amount of impact. In the end, for the sake of the Queensland economy, for the sake of the employment opportunities for future Queenslanders, for the sake of providing that infrastructure and that regional development, we have to do them. Dr Rawlings went on to say—

"We have attempted to be balanced in our approach and have demonstrated significant resilience, often in the face of stiff opposition."

I take this opportunity to agree and to congratulate those in the mining industry who have had to wrestle with these issues in order to deal with these problems. The issues of native title and cultural heritage, however, are a lot more intransigent. They have much more to do with politics. They are a lot harder to find a solution to.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr SEENEY: The two main threats to the Queensland mining industry are the native title and cultural heritage provisions that are being worked up by this Government and will be debated shortly by this Parliament.

I will spend some time dealing with the situation regarding native title. I say at the outset that it is difficult to understate the threat that the continuation of the native title impasse presents to the Queensland mining industry. It was interesting to hear the Premier this morning make a ministerial statement concerning the Queensland legislation which is currently being considered by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr Borbidge: After 500 minor amendments.

Mr SEENEY: Yes. Mr Beattie said that his information was that it would be tabled in Federal Parliament today. He seemed somewhat surprised that all 13 parts requiring determination from the Minister had been approved. In reality there was no need for him to be surprised. The Queensland legislation was well above the minimum requirements of the Commonwealth legislation.

The legislation that was passed through this House—it was opposed by the Opposition as extending rights to one group of Queenslanders that most other Queenslanders do not enjoy—was a long way short of what the Queensland mining industry deserved. As the Leader of the Opposition said, that legislation had to have 500 amendments made to it. That is a good indication of the extent to which it was rushed through this House. It is a good indication of the lack of preparation that went into that legislation. The Premier said that it was nitpicking. Five hundred minor amendments could hardly be called nitpicking. It is a good indication of the incompetence with which the Government has approached the whole issue of native title.

There has been an 18-month delay in dealing with this legislation. This morning the Premier was very quick to blame the Federal Government, as he is very quick to blame the Federal Government for almost everything. That delay has caused more problems for the mining industry. The fault for that delay lies very squarely at the feet of this Government—at the feet of the Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Let us look at the points raised by the Premier in his ministerial statement. First, as I said, the scheme was well above the threshold of Commonwealth requirements. The coalition fought for the consideration of native title before the law on an absolutely equal footing so that all Queenslanders were treated equally under native title legislation. What the Government provided on mining projects was a right to negotiate for Aboriginal people. That far exceeds the sort of consideration available to any other land-holder. A private member's Bill before this House, introduced by the member for Gladstone, seeks to rectify that problem.

Once again we in this House will have the opportunity to debate that issue. Once again we will have the opportunity to debate whether every Queenslanders should be treated equally in respect of native title. It goes to the heart of what level this Parliament considers native title to be at—whether it is equal to freehold title or somehow greater, that is, inclusive of rights that freehold titleholders do not have.

I look forward to that debate and I look forward to making a detailed contribution to it. At that time I will reassert the position set out by the coalition in the debate on the Queensland native title legislation, that is, that every Queenslanders should be treated equally and have the same rights when it comes to mineral exploration and mineral development on their land.

As we said during the debate on the State legislation, the legislation which was passed by the State Parliament and which has been before the Commonwealth Parliament for 18 months is discriminatory. It was unnecessary so far as we were concerned, but it was necessary if the Premier was to have any chance of getting it past the Left Wing loonies in his own party. That challenge remains.

The challenge for the Premier and the State Government now is to convince their own colleagues in the Left of the Labor Party, who dominate the Senate, to support their legislation. We will watch with interest over the next couple of weeks to see whether those opposite can convince the Left of their own party, who dominate the Senate, to provide them with support. We will watch with interest to see whether they can convince Federal Labor members such as Wayne Swan—

Mr Kaiser: He is a Left Winger!

Mr SEENEY: Hopefully he is one of the more moderate. What about the Left Wing senators? What about Senator Jan McLucas? She is left of Left! How are they going to go about convincing somebody such as her? What about Nick Bolkus? How are they going to go about convincing him that their legislation deserves his support? That is the challenge for those opposite.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Wayne Swan is supposedly in the centre. It is a bit hard for those of us outside this factional arrangement to understand who fits where. The challenge for those opposite is to get that legislation—albeit flawed, albeit far from adequate, albeit far short of what the Queensland mining industry deserves—through the Federal Senate. We will watch with interest. The Queensland mining industry will also watch with interest. The Queensland mining industry is desperate for a result in relation to that particular piece of legislation.

The important point is that it is Labor in the Senate that has stretched out this native title issue over a number of years. It is the Labor representatives in the Senate who have turned this into a marathon effort. The Labor representatives in the Senate will have a choice between speeding up the passage of the Queensland legislation or delaying it even longer.

It was interesting to see that the Premier said this morning that he will now seek the backing of the Federal Labor Party. I remember him saying in this House a few months ago that he was confident that he had it. It is obvious that the backroom deals need to be done. It is obvious that this issue will need to be considered at the faction meetings.

I hope for the sake of the Queensland mining industry that this legislation gets through. Even though it is flawed and even though we did not vote for it, it will, to some extent at least, break the impasse. It is only slightly better than the Federal legislation which the Queensland mining industry will need to fall back on.

The point is that an opportunity has been lost. The Queensland Parliament had the opportunity to pass a piece of legislation that would have made it possible for the Queensland mining industry to go forward under the native title regime, and the Government blew it. Not only did it not introduce into this House a piece of legislation that took advantage of the opportunity to provide the Queensland mining industry with the chance to continue to develop and to go forward with those projects that are so necessary for Queensland to meet the jobs targets that those in the Government talk about constantly; when it came to the crunch it was not prepared to introduce and pass a piece of legislation that gave it even half a chance of meeting its own jobs targets. So now there is a flawed, inadequate piece of legislation being held up in the Federal Senate by the colleagues of Government members. It gets worse and worse. The State Government faces the challenge of getting that legislation through the Federal Senate.

I want to take the opportunity to talk in some little detail about some of the difficulties being faced by Queensland mining companies as they strive to develop some of those projects. Those projects are important, and their importance is self-evident. It is important that that exploration work be undertaken in order to replace some of the old mines that close. It is imperative that mineral explorers have the ability to continually explore, and that, in a nutshell, is the problem.

The areas of critical concern with the Act relate, firstly, to access to the exploration permit tenement to undertake drilling operations and, secondly, to the fact that no new title will be granted until late 2000 at the earliest, even if Government members are successful in obtaining the support of their Federal colleagues in the Senate. In particular, the meaning of "low impact activity" has been raised with me by just about everybody that I have had any contact with in the mining and exploration industry. Section 482(e) defines it as—

"... drilling and activities associated with drilling that—

- (i) do not include clearing or site excavation, other than the minimum necessary to establish a drill pad for a mobile rig;
- (ii) do not include clearing for a road or track."

Subsection (ii) is probably the most relevant provision. These definitions indicate that new access roads or tracks and drill sites for drilling activities are unable to be cleared under a low impact exploration permit. This effectively means that, for an exploration company to undertake drilling in just about every prospective area in Queensland, it must apply for a high impact exploration permit. To obtain a high impact exploration permit, explorers must enter into negotiations and compensation agreements, including payments, with native title holders and native title claimants.

The industry's key concerns with that are, obviously, that it is an impediment to drilling. Drilling is one of the most crucial aspects of the exploration and discovery process. It is impossible to discover a mineral deposit without drilling. To limit drilling to those who hold high impact permits, because of the definition which states that low impact activity does not include clearing for a road or track, is quite simply impractical and impossible.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I have just had a look at the Minister's second-reading speech. The primary policy objectives of this Bill are nothing like what the member has been debating. I have given him some leeway. I suggest now that he return to the contents of the Bill. The Bill is about a number of very minor amendments to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act, the Explosives Act and the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act. I have given the member some leeway, but I suggest that he now return to the contents of the Bill.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, with the greatest respect, you were not in the Chamber before lunch when I started to make this speech. I made it very clear at the beginning of my address that while the provisions of this legislation will be supported by us, the concern that we have is for the very future of the mining industry in its totality. I also made the point that this House has had very little opportunity to consider some of these issues; this is the first time that we have been able to debate anything concerning the mining industry in this—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has had 25 minutes to discuss those issues. I now ask him to turn to the Bill. The Standing Orders are very clear that debate must be relevant to the Bill under consideration. Some leeway is given, and I think the member has been given adequate leeway. I will not allow a much broader discussion than that. The member should return to the Bill.

Mr Lucas: He is really a bit of a cubist when it comes to this sort of thing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not need help from the member for Lytton. I could do without it, in fact. I will give the member five more minutes if he wishes to speak about general matters, and then I ask him to return to the contents of the Bill.

Mr SEENEY: I find it difficult to understand the ruling. However, as I said, this is the first opportunity we have had to bring to the attention of the House issues concerning the mining industry. This particular legislation is the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and, as I said at the beginning of my speech, it deals with arrangements for superannuation schemes. It also deals with amendments to create some consistency in mine safety legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to debate the matter with the member. The rulings from the Chair have been very clear. When we are debating minor amendments to legislation, they are not to become wide-ranging debates on a particular industry. Minor amendments to legislation should be treated as minor amendments, and that is what should be debated. I have been tolerant and I have allowed the member time to discuss general issues. He is a new shadow Minister and I realise that he wants to express his views, but the rulings from the Chair have been firm for some years now that if minor amendments are under consideration, the debate should be confined to those amendments. We do not want to have major debates on minor amendments. That is what the rules are there for. I will not debate the matter any further. We will not have major debates on minor amendments to legislation, because we would be here forever. My patience has run out. I ask the member to address the amendments contained in the Bill. I will warn him only once more and then I will sit him down.

Mr SEENEY: May I finish very briefly making the point that I was making?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, that is it. The member will return to the Bill.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, for the record, may I register my disappointment at your ruling. I register also my difficulty in understanding your ruling, given some of the debates that I have listened to in this Chamber. I register my further difficulty in understanding your ruling, given some of the leeway and latitude that I have seen extended to Government members. Having said that, I have the utmost respect for the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Callide is lucky that I am not thin-skinned, otherwise I would take some exception to his comments, but I will not do so.

Mr SEENEY: Can I say that I have the utmost respect for this institution. Mr Deputy Speaker, even though I have great difficulty in understanding your ruling, I will reluctantly comply with it.

I will conclude my contribution to the debate by reiterating that the Opposition does not have any opposition to the minor amendments that are contained in this legislation. The amendments that the Bill makes to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Act are sensible, and they certainly have our support. We can only hope that, in time, that superannuation fund continues to have plenty of mine employees to make the contributions that are necessary for the fund to continue.

Given the threats that the mining industry is facing, which I would have liked the opportunity to outline to the House, and given that some people are quite seriously questioning the future of the mining industry, there is certainly some doubt in the minds of many people in Queensland that we will need a Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers' Superannuation Fund at all. That questioning is for those reasons which I began to outline and which I will welcome an opportunity to outline at some future date.

There must be grave concern in the minds of every member that an industry which has made such a contribution to the State economy as the mining industry obviously has can face a position where its long-term future is seriously being questioned by senior people within the industry.

Mr Wilson: Which amendment are you referring to?

Mr SEENEY: I am talking about the amendments to the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers Superannuation Act.

Mr Wilson: Which amendment?

Mr SEENEY: I direct the member to the Explanatory Notes. If he pushes the button, one of the attendants will bring it to him and he can take a moment and read it. The first policy objective of the Bill is—

"... to provide a statutory basis for an existing administrative arrangement whereby the obligation on both coal employers and employees to pay superannuation contributions does not apply in respect of periods when an employee is on unpaid leave ..."

That is the particular part of this piece of legislation that I am referring to. Obviously the honourable member was not listening when I was saying that the coalition supports that position. However, we sincerely hope that there will be a mining industry which will provide employment to people and enable them to make contributions to the superannuation fund.

What my esteemed friend, the honourable member, does not understand is that there is a limit to the impediments that can be placed on an industry such as the mining industry. There is a limit to the impediments that can be placed on any industry. There is a limit to the number of hurdles that can be placed in front of any prospective mining project. When we reach that limit we will not have a mining industry. We will not need a superannuation fund because there will no longer be a mining industry to provide the employment, to provide the economic activity and to provide the regional development that has been so important to this State. The mining industry has played an important part in the development of this State.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Ferny Grove will cease interjecting. We want to hear the member for Callide.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I had forgotten which seat the member represented. All these Brisbane members confuse me. They are all the same—union clones. They all come out like peas in a pod.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: He should appreciate the traditions of the House and interject from his own seat.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: He is interjecting from his correct seat.

Mr SEENEY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your assistance. As I was saying, there is a limit to the number of impediments that can be placed on any mining project. The second major policy objective of this Bill must be seen against the background of the impediments that particular pieces of legislation place in front of mining projects. The second major policy objective sets out to correct a number of anomalies which have occurred with the amalgamation of the two mine safety Bills which were passed through this House late last year.

Once again we have a situation where members such as the member for Ferny Grove—given his narrow perspective of the mining industry, and given that he only sees the mining industry, or any industry for that matter, from one very narrow point of view—fail to realise that pieces of legislation, such as those which this legislation seeks to correct, place impediments, hurdles and burdens on the mining

industry and make it less and less likely that mining projects are going to proceed. They make it less and less likely that those mining projects are going to provide the types of jobs, the types of economic activity and the types of regional development that they traditionally provide in Queensland.

Those are the points I was making, Mr Deputy Speaker, before you ruled that I was not allowed to continue. I believe they are very pertinent points. There has to be a realisation that there is a cumulative effect to the extent that these impediments impose an intolerable burden on the Queensland mining industry. We have senior people in the mining industry who are very seriously questioning whether the industry has a future. As a result, we see that major mining projects are delayed interminably. We also have major mining companies who are taking their exploration efforts overseas. They are doing that because of the cumulative effect of legislation of the type to which I have referred.

The pieces of legislation which this Bill sets out to amend amount to a further accumulation of impediments to the mining industry. They amount to a further detriment to the development of the industry. They constitute a burden which is becoming intolerable. That is a perspective which is totally lacking in members on the other side of the House—particularly amongst the union clones who constitute the backbench.

As I said, we have had very little opportunity to debate issues pertaining to the mining industry. This is the first piece of legislation that I have had the opportunity to deal with as shadow Minister. There are major issues in the mining industry that deserve serious consideration.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, perhaps you could help me out with the baby-faced fellow up the back. The member for Springwood, is it? The member for Springwood should begin—

Mr Kaiser: The member for Woodridge.

Mr SEENEY: Not the member for Woodridge; he is not baby-faced, he is just plain ugly. The member for Springwood should begin to realise that this is a serious issue. It is all very well for young members who do not appreciate the mining industry to come into this House—

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. I object to the member for Callide referring to me in that way—"young members".

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is nothing in the Standing Orders that says that remarks about age should be withdrawn.

Mr SEENEY: I thought I was being charitable to the Minister. I certainly apologise if he takes offence at being described as young. As I was saying before I was interrupted, it is very easy to take the mining industry for granted. It is very easy to lose sight of the fact that this industry makes a huge contribution to the State of Queensland. It made a huge contribution to this State long before the baby-faced member for Springwood ever came into this House. It is not surprising that the contribution that the mining industry makes is not appreciated by members such as the member for Springwood.

It is not surprising that members opposite do not understand that the effects of legislation such as this—which Mr Deputy Speaker instructed me to speak to—are not fully appreciated by such members as the honourable member for Springwood.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I suggest there is also a Standing Order which contains a phrase about tedium in repetition. I understand that the member has a description for the member for Springwood, but I have heard it five times now. It is becoming repetitious. I think we should get back to the Bill.

Mr Musgrove: I think he is trying to come on to me.

Mr SEENEY: I did not hear that interjection. I would appreciate the opportunity of responding to the interjection. I suggest to the new member for Woodridge that, if he is going to interject, he do so loudly enough so that I can respond. However, he should be warned that, if he interjects, he does so at his own peril.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think that we have had enough hilarity. I suggest to the members on my right that interjections are welcome only if they are relevant, only if they are reasonable or only if they are witty. Otherwise they should be very rare. This Bill contains only minor amendments. We should discuss just those minor amendments. If we were to discuss every Bill in its totality, we would never get out of this place. That has been a longstanding rule for Bills that amend legislation in a minor way, so I suggest to the member for Callide that he has had his fun—

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want to disagree with your ruling but, when you said that there has been a longstanding rule that members speak specifically to the Bill, my understanding is that in the second-reading debate of a Bill that is relevant to an industry some latitude was given for the very reasons that the member for Callide has advanced.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Callide has had 45 minutes of latitude.

Mr SLACK: But it is not strictly that members have to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Some latitude has been given, and that is for the Chair to rule on.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept your ruling, even though I have some difficulty in accepting it.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Despite the continued interjections from the Labor clones on the backbench, I am making a very determined attempt to speak to the policy objectives of the Bill. Be that as it may, I welcome interjections and I would be only too pleased to respond to them. As I was saying to the member for—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I do not welcome interjections, so I suggest that you do not receive them.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I agree with you that the interjections need to be pertinent, witty and the other descriptions that you applied to them. I certainly agree with you in that respect.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr SEENEY: I am only sorry that I could not hear. Mr Deputy Speaker, I add to your words that the interjections should be loud enough for me to hear them so that I can respond to them.

However, I take the debate back to the Bill. I was concluding my remarks by saying that I once again want to place on record the fact that we on this side understand very sincerely the contribution that the mining industry has made to the State's economy. We understand very sincerely the difficult worldwide economic circumstances in which the Queensland mining industry needs to operate. We understand very sincerely the impediments that have been placed in the way of the Queensland mining industry by a series of legislation, some of which this amendment Bill sets out to address. We understand very sincerely the cumulative effect of those pieces of legislation.
