



Speech by

**Hon. ANNA BLIGH**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

Hansard Tuesday, 16 June 2009

---

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coal Industry

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.37 am): Without a doubt, 2008-09 has been a difficult time for the coal industry in Queensland. The global financial crisis has flattened demand from partners such as Japan, China and India, and we have seen devastating job losses in mines across the state. Just last year these mining areas were enjoying an almost unprecedented boom and were experiencing an era of prosperity that it seemed would never end. Of course the boom did end, and it ended more quickly and more completely than anyone in the industry could have imagined or predicted.

The effects of the global financial crisis have brought uncertainty to regions that just 12 months ago were bursting with optimism and self-confidence. But we are also seeing signs that despite this bruised confidence the Queensland coal industry is dusting itself off and getting ready to come back bigger, better and stronger than ever before.

The Waratah Coal proposal to create Australia's largest thermal coalmine in Central Queensland and provide up to 45,000 jobs has now entered a new phase. It is exciting to note that this \$6.55 billion plan to mine 1.4 billion tonnes of coal in the Galilee Basin and build a 490-kilometre rail line to Abbot Point coal port is now back on track. Members will recall that the original plan was to carry the coal through Shoalwater Bay at a new coal port, but this was rejected by the federal government for environmental reasons.

The new route north through the established Abbot Point coal port means the application can now be reassessed. The proposal has already been declared a project of state significance, so my government will be doing everything we can to ensure there is an answer one way or the other as soon as possible.

The confidence in the continued demand for Queensland coal that is driving the Waratah project is not the only green shoot for our state's coal industry. Just last week I welcomed Direct Invest's decision to bankroll a new \$250 million coal development at the Cameby Downs Mine in the Surat Basin. Direct Invest's subsidiary company Syntech Resources also plans to invest as much as \$2 billion in a next-generation coal-to-liquids conversion plant in the same region. A prefeasibility on that project called SunState will be completed very soon.

The \$250 million Cameby Downs Mine project is located between Miles and Chinchilla and will begin construction in July, with the aim to export 1.4 million tonnes of thermal coal a year by 2010. So starting construction in July—

**Mr Horan:** How are the trucks going to get through Toowoomba? They can't get through now.

**Ms BLIGH:** I note that the member for Toowoomba South does not support jobs and projects in the Surat Basin; our government will.

**Mr HORAN:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will resume her seat.

**Mr HORAN:** I find that remark offensive because it is incorrect. My comment was that there is no room for the trucks to get through the main street of Toowoomba now as it is gridlocked. The Premier turned that around to us not supporting the project. What we need is a bypass so that the trucks can get down to the export port, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! If the honourable member finds something offensive—

**Ms BLIGH:** Whatever the member found offensive I will happily withdraw. This is a very important project for the Surat Basin. It will not only bring prosperity to towns like Miles and Chinchilla but it will also bring prosperity to the city of Toowoomba. What it means in the first stage is a coalmine that will export 1.4 million tonnes of thermal coal by next year. The second stage could boost export capacity to 20 million tonnes a year and is scheduled for completion by 2013.

I draw the attention of those opposite to a project called the Southern Missing Link. If they have not heard of it, I suggest they get briefed on it. It is being operated by a consortium run by Everald Compton, who I understand is well known to members opposite. I would suggest that they get a briefing from him. I will enjoy telling him of their lack of support for it.

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, resume your seat. Member for Warrego on a point of order.

**Mr HOBBS:** I find the Premier's words offensive. She says that we are not supportive of this project. She is deliberately lying, the way she does normally. Don't do it. Tell the truth for once!

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! You will withdraw the word that is unparliamentary.

**Mr HOBBS:** I withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, if the member for Warrego finds something offensive withdraw it and let us get on with it.

**Ms BLIGH:** Whatever he finds offensive I withdraw. As I said, the first stage will create 100 jobs during construction and 100 jobs during production, while the second stage could create up to 600 jobs. The SunState project looking at the next-generation coal-to-liquid conversion manufacturing plant could employ up to 1,000 people.

This is a very significant investment in a part of our state that has been hit by drought and has had a depressed economy for a number of years. The project has the complete support of this side of the parliament. Both of these projects are a shot in the arm for anybody involved in our minerals and coal sector and are a very welcome sign of new jobs on the horizon.