




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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MINES AND ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (4.28 pm): In speaking to the Mines and Energy Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2), it is good to see the provisions to implement the safety and health recommendations made by the Ombudsman, including the establishment of a Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health, and the alignment of mine safety and health legislation with other workplace health and safety legislation. Mine safety is probably one of the most important issues that will ever come our way. The coalition strongly emphasised this when, five years ago, Queensland suffered from a lack of suitable available inspectors. However, after much lobbying, to its credit the government introduced different grades of mine inspector and put in place career paths to broaden the skills and the knowledge within the inspectorate for this vital service.

It is very important to remember that mining towns need to become family friendly. As the member for Gregory has stated, one of the big issues when it comes to accidents and deaths resulting from fatigue is that many people who work in mining towns do not necessarily live in the towns. Some may live five or six hours drive away, sometimes a little further. They may be at home for five days and then will need to get back to work. Many have no choice but to drive. That is as a result of what has happened over the years. That issue needs to be addressed for safety reasons. It is very important to make mining towns family friendly.

The bill imposes an age limit of 16 on those operating heavy machinery. This will impact on family owned and operated mining and quarrying operations and on school based apprenticeships. Many small mining operators run family operations and teenagers have been encouraged to learn how to operate machinery and work equipment from a young age. This legislation will effectively destroy a tradition of teaching sons and daughters the family trade. The usual age for recruitment of a school based apprentice is 15. The ability to properly educate and train is undermined if the incentives for young people to operate machinery and equipment are removed. No theory can replace the experience of learning to safely manoeuvre and control machinery and equipment. That experience is essential to the education of school based apprentices and family members who want to learn those trades at an early age.

This country covers three million square miles. Imposing high age limits for the operation of machinery will teach our young generation to be idle and to fear stepping out and having a go as it may cause injury. What are we going to resort to? Will we stop our children from playing cricket? I received a black eye when a cricket ball hit me in the head, but my coach just said, 'Next time, duck.' Do we ban cricket because we fear our children may get hurt? Do we ban rugby league because we fear our children may get hurt? Do we want to turn the children of this country and state into a bunch of wusses? This is bad legislation.

Another deficiency of the proposed legislation is its failure to provide adequate measures to ensure that the allocation of quarry sale permits will provide the maximum return in royalties. This legislation is supposed to enhance the administration of tenure related resources. However, it does not address the insufficient checks and balances in the tendering process. The proposed changes to the Mineral Resources Act 1989 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 fall hopelessly short of

the mark and should go further to ensure that future royalty revenue estimates are used as a commitment from the holders of tenures that they will, in fact, develop and utilise the tenure site. Under current practices, quarry operators conduct extensive and costly research to secure suitable pits for the extraction of quarry products. This involves considerable time, money and effort on the part of the quarry business in assessing the suitability of a proposed pit. They are then required to submit an expression of interest to DERM for the intended quarry site. DERM then releases an open tender for the proposed site and the quarry business, which has gone to considerable expense to identify the site being tendered for, must apply for a tenure with no guarantee that it will be successful. I have been advised of numerous cases where operators have conducted costly research on a proposed quarry, only to find that the site is allocated to another applicant who has neither the resources nor the intention of developing the site into a working quarry. I call on the government to review this. I have written to the minister about the situation. I bring that to the attention of the House.