



Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 9 March 2011

MOTION: DARLING DOWNS, EXPLORATION PERMITS



Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (5.46 pm): I move—

That all words after 'House' be deleted and the following words inserted:

- Notes that the previous Minister for Mines led development of the Strategic Cropping Land policy framework.
- Acknowledges the strong provisions in the Mineral Resources Act to protect landholders if permits to explore have been placed over their land.
- Recognises the importance of the resources industry to the state economy and to jobs for Queenslanders now and in the future.
- Supports the development of the resources industry subject to meeting legislative requirements and strict environmental conditions already in place.
- Notes that less than 1% of land explored for mining has a mining lease placed over it.

Queenslanders must once again be confused about the LNP's stance on the mining industry and the jobs it brings to Queensland. Just yesterday the member for Callide stood in this House claiming the LNP supported Queensland's resources industry. Today we hear that the LNP wants to place ad hoc limits on the mining industry and risk thousands of jobs for Queenslanders. Queenslanders should be confused and concerned.

In relation to CSG mining, the Leader of the Opposition, whom we have just heard from, was yesterday quoted on ABC saying a moratorium was not the answer. He said—

Those things need to be balanced with issues like sovereign risk. Sovereign risk that will say we can't invest in Queensland because the government is coming out with moratoriums.

Placing unpredictable and ad hoc limits on mining exploration will create a risk in the eyes of those looking to invest in our state and risk the jobs of the future for Queensland. Figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal that some \$990 million is being invested in mining exploration alone in Queensland. So let us be clear about this. This is a \$990 million investment in the jobs of the future for a prosperous Queensland. Attempting to create rules and regulations that mean the government of the day can tear up an exploration permit on a whim will lead to uncertainty in the industry and a reluctance to invest in the state. That is why these commitments by the LNP are putting Queensland's jobs of the future at risk. Not even Russ Hinze would have proposed something as ad hoc and irresponsible as this for Queensland.

We understand community concerns. We certainly do. One of the first people who contacted me when I became minister for mining about these issues was the member for Toowoomba North. I did not hear from too many others. I heard from the member for Toowoomba North. He has been very active in raising questions on behalf of the people in his local area and has encouraged people to meet with me and other ministers this Sunday at community cabinet. I am looking forward to setting the record straight on some of the scaremongering that has come from those opposite. I want to make it absolutely clear. There is no application for a permit to start a mine at or near Kingsthorpe. There is no application for a permit to start a mine at or near Gowrie Junction.

There is a permit to explore an area as broad as 150 square kilometres. Companies are looking for what is in the ground, not proposing to dig it out. I have made that clear to the House. Laws already exclude exploration near places of residence, churches, sporting or community facilities, bores, dams, wells and permanent stockyards. We do not permit undermining in residential areas.

Historically speaking, when the permission to explore is granted it is very rare for that land to ever be mined. As I have made clear and as can be seen in the amendment to the motion that I commend to members, less than one per cent of land explored for mining has a mining lease placed over it. Even if exploration reveals that a commercially viable operation will be possible, there are still so many boxes that a company must tick before operations can start. I am sure the Minister for Environment and Resource Management will go through that.

Once again we see the division among those opposite that this motion before the House is trying to paper over. I am sure that moving this motion in the House today left a bitter taste in the mouth of the member for Callide. He has clearly been rolled by the party room. It is all about the divided forces opposite—the old Country Party trying to roll the future for Queensland and overturn the understandings and arrangements that have been around this industry for many years.