




Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Tuesday, 8 March 2011

MINES AND ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (5.15 pm), in reply: First of all I want to thank all honourable members for their participation in the debate, especially the member for Callide for his strong support for the safety regulations introduced by Labor governments over recent years in relation to mine safety and the protection of the environment in relation to a number of different resource operations. However, I do want to warn him about some of the verballing he has been subjected to by some of his so-called colleagues since. There are a few things I think they have suggested he said which I am not quite sure he did say, and I will be interested to see whether the party room discussions are as interesting as I hear they have been for the last couple of days.

The Mines and Energy Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) was introduced into the House by my colleague and now Minister for Energy and Water Utilities on 25 November 2010 to improve energy efficiency for gas appliances, enhance administration of Queensland's tenure related and safety and health related resource legislation, provide the statutory authority for the collection of forward royalty revenue estimates information, and allow for variations to the Gladstone Power Station agreement under the Gladstone Power Station Agreement Act 1993.

The bill, through amendments to the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, takes the necessary steps to revise energy labelling and introduce mandatory minimum energy performance standards, or MEPS, for gas appliances. All governments across Australia have committed to implementing this national initiative set through the Equipment Energy Efficiency, or E3, Program of the National Framework for Energy Efficiency. The general requirements for MEPS for domestic gas water heaters, including offences and penalties for noncompliance, will be set out in the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Regulation 2004, with amendments to be developed in the coming months. The introduction of MEPS for gas water heaters is projected to reduce Queensland's associated gas consumption by 1.01 petajoules and greenhouse gas emissions by 67 kilotons over the next 10 years. This is the equivalent of taking some 16,000 cars off our roads.

While Queensland has one of the safest mining industries in the world, this government will continue to strive to improve the safety of our mining industry. To reaffirm the Queensland government's commitment to improving the health and safety of workers in mining, the bill proposes various amendments to complement existing legislation and remove ambiguity. Currently it is common for contractors working at a mine site to use their own safety and health management system, either by itself or in conjunction with the mine's existing safety and health management systems. While most mines make an effort to map the interaction of the mine operator's safety and health management system and those of contractors working on the same site, coronial inquest findings have revealed that multiple safety and health management systems have led to confusion and may have contributed to the tragic death of a mineworker. The bill establishes a requirement for a single safety and health management system to be followed at any given site, removing any confusion and ensuring improved safety and health outcomes. Industry stakeholders have responded very positively to these amendments.

The member for Redlands raised concerns about setting a minimum age requirement for children to carry out work on mine sites, and that was reflected by a number of opposition members. This issue first came to the attention of the Mines Inspectorate when a complaint was received from a member of the public about a child operating machinery.

The reality is that children and heavy mining equipment do not mix. As the member for Waterford said, no-one would let a child drive a Hyundai Getz on a public road, so why would we let a child operate a 30-tonne excavator in a dangerous environment like a quarry? The member for Redlands describes this as a nanny state and as overregulation. Sometimes I think some of the members opposite would repeal the Factory Act 1804 if they had the chance.

The member for Warrego asked if consultation took place. I can reassure him that we saw the Queensland Resources Council being consulted about the amendments and it had no problem with the amendments. The Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee was also consulted in mid-2010. The quarrying industry is represented on this committee and the committee raised no questions. I would also like to reassure the member for Warrego that the amendment to require insurance for explosives is related to items highlighted in the Australian Dangerous Goods Code and the Australian Explosives Code. Neither of those codes requires insurance for bullets that people with a weapons licence would use.

In referring to the requirement for over-16s to operate equipment on a mine site or a quarry site, the member for Gladstone sought clarification about the operation of that amendment. I must clarify for her that there is no connection between that amendment and the mine safety regulation changes that we are also talking about. It is a case that a dangerous mine site is a dangerous mine site. It does not matter what the ownership structure is; it is a mine site, and that is where we see the challenge and difficulty. We want to keep that clear distinction. To that end, I want to reassure members who think this amendment is somehow the beginning of steps towards the regulation not allowing younger people to operate equipment on farms and so forth. There is a clear distinction between the experience and history of heavy industrial mining and quarrying sites and agricultural properties. This amendment is about responding to the dangerous nature of mining and quarrying sites.

In that context the reality is that, as the member for Callide recognised, Queensland mines are among the safest in the world. The amendments that are before the House are about ensuring that this situation remains the case. The report shows that during 2009-10 Queensland suffered one fatality in the industry—a vehicle related accident in a quarry—compared to four industry fatalities the previous year. Work related injuries in the mining industry also fell in the key performance areas of severity, duration and days lost to injury. Medical treatments dropped from 924 to 546 injuries, while lost-time injuries fell from 301 to 285 injuries. There were 413 disabling injuries, down from 417 the previous year. All of these reductions in numbers represent progress, but we want to make our mining industry even safer for the workers in the industry.

A number of members during their contribution to the second reading debate raised issues that are outside the provisions of the bill—issues relating to Gowrie Junction and Kingsthorpe. There were concerns raised by the member for Nanango, the member for Condamine and the member for Toowoomba South. There were also concerns raised by the members for Gregory and Bundamba about FIFO and DIDO—fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out. I would be happy to talk to those members about those issues and provide them with appropriate briefings.

The amendments to the Mineral Resources Act 1989 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 that are included in the bill seek to formalise a previous longstanding practice of collecting future royalty revenue estimates from major producers. These amendments will improve the accuracy of budgetary information collected by the government and provide certainty to producers as to the confidentiality of this information.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the former minister for his contribution to bringing this legislation before the House, everyone in those areas of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation who administer mines and energy portfolio areas and the officers of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel and other departments who have contributed to the development and coordination of this extensive bill. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the Queensland Resources Council, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Association of Australia and other industry representatives and members who have helped with the development of this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.