



Speech by

Jo-Ann Miller

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (8.50 pm): I rise to speak to the estimates committee report in relation to Natural Resources and Mines because I am the shadow minister for mines on behalf of the Australian Labor Party in this parliament. I want to talk briefly about a couple of issues, one of which relates to untreated water in mines going into the river systems, an issue which has been flagged in numerous media reports throughout Queensland, and also the fact that many people, particularly those in Central Queensland, believe that a deal was done between this government and the mining companies with regard to discharging water into waterways in relation to royalties. It was very sad that the minister dodged all of these questions in this regard. In fact, in August this year the Rockhampton Regional Council raised the issue in relation to untreated water in mines. It is a very serious issue. It is a very serious issue for mining companies, it is a very serious issue for the environment movement and it is a very serious issue for local councils as well. It is my view that we were treated with absolute contempt during that estimates committee hearing.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mrs MILLER: I take the interjection from the environment minister. All we had on that day was ping-pong: it was ping-pong between the Minister for Mines and the Minister for Environment. That was what it was. It was ministerial ping-pong between you and neither of you took any responsibility. Neither of you took any responsibility at all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ruthenberg): Order! Member for Bundamba, please address your comments through the chair.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much, and I think the same should go for them. In relation to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundamba—

Mrs MILLER: Yes?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—is that a reflection on the chair?

Mrs MILLER: No, it is not. There would be no-one in this parliament more dedicated to mine safety than me. My great-grandfather was killed in an Ipswich coalmine. It is something that my family has lived with forever in terms of mine safety. My father himself was trapped down coalmines in Ipswich several times. We have had friends, uncles, grandfathers and many people who suffered from mining injuries down those mines in Ipswich. It is something that is very close to my heart and it is close to my family's heart. I am very pleased that the minister has put mine safety at the front of the agenda of this government. It is something that we always must have at the front of coalmining in particular and it is something that the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division puts significant resources towards as well.

I am also very proud to have SIMTARS, the Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station, located in my electorate. Harrow and the boys do an absolutely wonderful job trying to keep not only the coalmines

throughout Queensland safe but also coalmines throughout the world safe. Something that really should be acknowledged by all governments throughout Australia is the contribution that SIMTARS makes around the world to coalmining safety. In fact, a lot of the technology that has been developed at SIMTARS is exported around the world because it is actually so good. The Commissioner for Mine Safety and Harrow and all of the boys and girls at SIMTARS do an absolutely fantastic job.

Mr Cripps: We went through it in detail.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, we did and I just want to put on record our support for SIMTARS and say that we would always want to see that the number of public servants who work at SIMTARS remain. The Commissioner for Mine Safety also spoke in relation to smoking down mines. I think he mentioned one case about that. We must always be forever vigilant in relation to mine safety. It is my clear view that we can never go back to the disasters that occurred throughout history, including one in Ipswich. The particular one in Ipswich that I certainly remember was the Box Flat mining disaster and several other incidents that occurred where people were blown up. In fact, many people in this parliament wonder why I get so worked up about mine safety, but I tell you what: you never, ever forget when your father is trapped down a coalmine and he has written a message in chalk to his family saying goodbye until the boys dig him out. I commend this report to the House.