




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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MORANBAH, MINING INDUSTRY

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (10.51 pm): I want to highlight the plight of miners in the Moranbah coalfields. There has been an attempt to try to discredit the industrial action currently happening as a pay dispute. I want to dispel that myth. The strike affecting six mining operations involving over 3,500 workers has nothing to do with pay. It is about safety conditions, rosters and the future of mining communities across Queensland. Workers have been trying to negotiate for 18 months with these big, foreign owned mining companies. The dispute over safety officers coming from the workers is basic, common-sense stuff. It is not hard to understand that a safety officer who is familiar with how the operation runs will be much more effective in implementing safety measures than someone in an office away from what is happening on the floor. But the biggest issue facing workers and the Moranbah community is the social disintegration happening because of a growing fly-in fly-out workforce and rosters that are not family friendly.

There are enormous pressures being put on striking workers to go back to work, and not just from the mines. Analysts are saying that this could affect the whole mining boom as other companies watch to see if BHP Billiton is able to get away with crushing workers' demands for reasonable working conditions. That is ridiculous. Our position as a resource-rich state gives us incredible bargaining power to get the best outcomes for our communities and our workers. The greatest threat to the benefit of mining in this country is not striking workers; it is allowing foreign workers to take mining jobs. There are trillions of dollars in mining development in the pipeline Australia-wide. We are in a position of strength to make sure our communities and workers and families benefit from the resources boom.

The Bowen Basin area produces over \$6 billion in gross revenue, yet mining communities like Moranbah are battling to retain their family oriented way of life. The town is being torn apart by current fly-in fly-out arrangements. There is no affordable housing and, because of skyrocketing house prices, rates are soaring. Health services are underresourced and cannot cope with life-threatening medical emergencies. Community services are understaffed because agencies cannot afford to pay wages to cover astronomical rents. Small businesses are closing and families are leaving in droves as fly-in fly-out workers take over neighbourhoods and MAC camps housing thousands of single men spring up all over the place.

Issues around loneliness, depression and alcoholism are facts of life for men forced to be away from their families and loved ones, and it is a growing problem likely to end up costing the government millions of dollars to address. Moranbah was once a close-knit, family-friendly community that thrived from the mines on its doorstep. Rosters were family friendly and mines were made to employ a percentage of locals and provide—

(Time expired)