Speech By

Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

MINING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs FRECKLINGTON (Nanango—LNP) (8.23 pm): I rise to contribute to the Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. While I find it very difficult to follow such bizarre ramblings, I will do my best. I would like to discuss this bill because it is such a great leap forward in relation to red-tape reduction in Queensland. One of the election promises made by this government was to go a long way towards reducing red tape across the state. Reviewing this legislation for the small mining sector was one of the key actions identified in the government's first six-month action plan. Small scale mining is an important industry to Queensland. It provides economic benefits to small towns through employment, tourism and hobbyist activities.

Mr Rickuss: Kicking goals again.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We are kicking goals again. I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. Incremental increases in regulatory burden and compliance costs have added pressure on small scale miners and repeatedly driven down industry participation and associated benefits to regional Queensland. The reforms proposed in this bill include a suite of amendments to reduce both red and green tape for small scale mining of low-risk commodities and fossicking, as well as additional amendments to clarify and modernise resources legislation. The red and green tape reduction reforms in this bill aim to relieve undue financial and regulatory burden placed on the small mining industry and fossickers.

Mr Costigan: They've been choked.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: They have been choked. It appears that the member behind me does not get that point. This bill proposes amendments to the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to modify the existing mining claim tenure system to allow small scale miners of opals and gemstones, on a mining lease, to transition to a mining claim and no longer pay rent. What a wonderful initiative of the Newman LNP government. Under this reform, it is estimated that between 700 and 1,200 opal and gemstone mining leaseholders may be eligible to transition to a mining claim.

Amendments are also proposed to the Environmental Protection Act 1994, under which eligible small scale mining operations on a mining claim and small scale exploration permits will not be required to hold an environmental authority. The removal of an EA requirement will benefit these opal and gemstone miners, as they will no longer need to make an application, that is, they will no longer need to pay an application fee, pay annual fees or comply with ongoing administrative requirements such as annual returns associated with a mining lease. This is what we mean when we talk about the reduction of red tape by this Newman LNP government.

As well as new operators, it is estimated that between 500 and 750 existing mining lease EA holders, around 250 existing exploration permit EA holders and up to 1,800 existing mining claim EA holders will also benefit from this reform. These are wonderful figures that I can put before the House today. While key reforms in the bill specifically provide for opal and gemstone miners, some amendments will benefit all small scale activities under a mining claim. All small scale explorers for any mineral other than coal will benefit from being able to operate without an environmental authority

if they meet low-risk eligibility criteria. All mining claim holders will benefit from a streamlined application process. I reiterate that these are wonderful red-tape reduction initiatives by this Newman-led LNP government. The annual fee of $551 and other administrative requirements associated with maintaining an environmental authority will no longer apply to eligible small scale mining activities.

For the benefit of the House, I will list other proposed amendments in the bill providing significant red-tape benefits to small scale miners: removing unnecessary native title restrictions on fossicking; allowing petroleum industry proponents to co-locate other linear infrastructure and structures on petroleum pipeline licences; transferring MRA statutory powers and functions to the minister and chief executive; and amending the definition of 'occupier', which is an important change because it will provide certainty to landholders and the industry. I note that we can now include, under occupier, the term 'family trust'. As someone from the regions who has practised in rural success and property law, I understand the need for these landholders to be included as occupiers if they just happen to be practising under a family trust.

The reforms to the Fossicking Act 1994 will remove the mandatory requirement to negotiate an Indigenous land use agreement by those seeking to fossick over relevant land areas. This will reduce the potentially expensive and time-consuming undertaking which is beyond the budget and inclination of many of these fossickers and is, in effect, deterring this type of tourist activity.

Amendments to the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 will allow pipeline licence—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Member for Nanango, could you take a seat for a moment. Honourable members, I am having difficulty hearing. Could the conversations subside so we can at least hear the member for Nanango. I call the member for Nanango.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. This will minimise the impact of petroleum and gas activities on landholders, the environment and overlapping tenure holders. It will also remove the need for project proponents to seek additional licences to authorise co-location of infrastructure with the pipeline thereby again eliminating unnecessary red tape.

The Mineral Resources Act will be modernised to bring it into line with more modern resources legislation. This consistency will again reduce red tape for the department, reduce confusion within the industry and confusion for the poor landholders about whether a government officer is appropriately authorised to take any required action under the resources legislation. This bill also seeks to remove uncertainty about the legal validity of commercial agreements made between the holder of a resource authority and a third party about part of a tenure.

What I would like to do in briefly summing up is outline how this act engages with the broader reforms within the resource sector and what the Newman LNP government is doing in this regard. The reforms proposed in this bill are part of a broad suite of regulatory reforms currently being implemented by our government in Queensland which could potentially generate savings of hundreds of millions of dollars for the Queensland resources sector and substantially reduce approval times for future major resource projects.

The government's focus on regulatory reform in the resources sector has included, amongst other things: establishment of the Resources Cabinet Committee to examine the impacts of regulation on the mining industry; establishment of the parliamentary committee inquiry into the agriculture and resource industries; and implementation of a range of specific initiatives and projects aimed at reducing red tape within the mining and exploration industries.

Our government is currently working collaboratively with industry to drive business and system transformation related to resource permit processes through the mining and exploration red tape streamlining project. Key achievements of this package of reforms to date include establishment of the Mines Online and MyMinesOnline portals to enable lodgement and tracking of activity notices and applications. From 31 March 2013 it is intended to enable online lodgement of applications for mineral exploration permits, as well as post—

Mr Newman: About time too.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection from the Premier. It is about time that we got these applications done in a timely manner.

A government member: Long overdue.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Very long overdue. I commend the bill to the House.