




Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 9 September 2014

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES (COMMON PROVISIONS) BILL

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (5.25 pm): I rise to support the Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Bill 2014. This bill carries amendments that will result in greater efficiencies and cost savings for the mining industry and for government, while maintaining environmental safeguards. The amendments are in line with the proportional assessment model that was put in place as part of the green-tape-reduction reforms that commenced in March 2013—green-tape-reduction reforms that, I recall, were actually supported by the opposition.

There are two key amendments to the legislation in my portfolio of Environment and Heritage Protection that I would like to speak briefly about today. Firstly, the bill amends the Environmental Protection Act 1994 to remove duplication that currently occurs if an environmental impact statement has been completed under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. These amendments mean that where there has been public notification as part of the EIS process and the environmental risks have not changed, there is no need to duplicate that public notification as part of the application for an environmental authority. I reassure the House that the public notification requirement for an environmental authority is only removed if the administering authority is satisfied that the environmental risks of the activity have not changed or that any submissions on a change would not be likely. If in doubt, public notification would still be required. This ensures that streamlining would only occur when appropriate.

Secondly, the bill carries amendments to reduce red tape for the mining industry by removing the requirement for low-risk mines that lodge a standard application to provide public notification of their application for an environmental authority. This approach better reflects the level of risk and scale of operations. The risks associated with standard applications are well known and not dependent on the location of the project. Those projects must meet the eligibility criteria, which includes that the type of mining may only be, as the minister rightly pointed out, alluvial mining, clay pit mining, dimension stone mining, hard rock mining, opal mining or shallow pit mining. However, the public right to object has been retained for higher risk mining leases. Mines that carry a higher risk and are required to lodge a site-specific application will still need to provide public notification about the application for an environmental authority. For example, I reassure the House that coalmines will always need to make a site-specific application. This provides an appropriate environmental safeguard that is proportionate to environmental risk.

The bill also clarifies the Land Court's role in relation to conditions imposed on an environmental authority by the Coordinator-General. Currently, an applicant or submitter has the right to appeal these conditions, but the Land Court has no power to vary the conditions so the appeal is groundless. This bill makes it clear that an objection to the Coordinator-General's conditions cannot be a ground of the appeal and the Land Court can strike out any objection that is made on those grounds. This means that the Land Court does not have to proceed to a full hearing where there are no grounds for the appeal.

These amendments strike a balance between reducing regulatory burden and providing the opportunity for community participation in the granting of environmental authorities. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Madam SPEAKER: I have viewed the speech in question and I have approved that being done, subject to the agreement of the House.

Leave granted.

The amendments in the bill provide for a notification and objection process that reflects the level of risk and scale of operations, removes duplication, reduces project delays and lowers costs for industry—especially for low risk operations. By reducing red tape, these changes have the potential to encourage investment in Queensland and further strengthen the resources industry, which is a pillar in our plan for a strong economy.

In summary, this bill strikes the right balance between resources sector growth, landholder rights and environmental protection. It will deliver on the Newman government's commitment to support the resources sector and stimulate Queensland's economy, while still retaining strong environmental safeguards. I commend this bill to the House.