



Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2014

MOTION: MINING INDUSTRY, FLY-IN FLY-OUT WORKFORCE

Mining Industry, Fly-in Fly-out Workforce



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House:

- notes the Labor opposition's recently released policy to end 100 per cent fly-in fly-out operations by giving workers a choice near existing resource communities;
- notes the Deputy Premier's statements, reported on 19 June this year, opposing 100 per cent fly-in fly-out mining operations; and
- calls on the Newman government to follow through on the Deputy Premier's promise as soon as possible and end 100 per cent fly-in fly-out operations near existing resource communities.

The Labor opposition has been forced to move this motion in response to another broken election promise from the Newman LNP government. In July 2011 the now Premier was categorical in his commitment when he said that 100 per cent fly-in fly-out, or FIFO, workforces were 'just simply something we would not tolerate if we get into government. That's our rule, our policy, it won't be tolerated.' The LNP's resources and energy election commitment further committed that 'The LNP has made clear its policy of not supporting 100% FIFO mining operation workforces.' This is another broken election promise from the Newman LNP government.

Late last year the Coordinator-General approved 900 permanent FIFO accommodation units at the Buffel Park Accommodation Village. The previous government made two approvals that did not prohibit the use of 100 per cent FIFO workforces, but did require that 80 per cent of the total workforces for these operations reside in the Bowen Basin. Conditions were also put in place for the proponent to provide 400 permanent houses. These conditions were never intended to allow companies to exclude local workers and were in response to the economic conditions at that time. Even the Deputy Premier acknowledges this, saying at estimates hearings this year—

I agreed with them at the time and I supported his government at the time in addressing a particular problem. That problem no longer exists.

The Deputy Premier was referring to the fact that the occupancy rate for hotel and motel accommodation was just two per cent in the Bowen Basin in 2011. At the height of the mining investment boom there was a critical housing shortage in the Bowen Basin. However, in the latest available figures from last year the vacancy rate for hotel and motel accommodation is now at the opposite extreme of 37 per cent. Over 8,000 jobs have been lost across the Bowen Basin over the last few years. Just last week when I was in Moranbah I was told that there are some 75 disconnections of electricity happening in that town. Our mining resource towns are suffering under this incompetent LNP government. I have to disagree with the Deputy Premier. Those decisions were a mistake. They did not anticipate the current downturn and if elected Labor will fix it up.

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Those opposite can laugh. This is no laughing matter. This is the arrogance and hypocrisy of this government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ruthenberg): Order!

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Deputy Premier and the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines are laughing at these mining resource companies that are suffering. It is no laughing matter. Last week I was in Moranbah speaking to the mayor, Anne Baker, who is passionate about her community. She is passionate about her town and the families who live there. This is a community that is suffering. We can see that if this policy is not fixed up these communities will die. This LNP government has done nothing to ease the burden on these communities. Whilst I was there I spoke to mums Kelly and Leanne. They are passionate about their community. Why is it that their husbands and their children cannot get a job down the road? They cannot get a job because the 100 per cent fly-in fly-out policy prohibits people living in that town working down the road. It is a policy of discrimination.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Deputy Premier, go and talk to Mayor Anne Baker, talk to Leanne and Peter and the people up there because they are upset. I was more than happy to go along to the Moranbah Workers Club and sit down and speak to the families about this issue. Let me tell members who crystallised this issue in my mind the most. The person who crystallised this issue the most was Linda, who worked at the workers club. She came up and said to me, 'Excuse me, Ms Palaszczuk, can I have a word?' This is what listening is all about. Linda said to me, 'Ms Palaszczuk, I am raising my son in this town. I am raising my son here in Moranbah. My husband has had to leave this town to get a job. His mates have had to leave this town to get a job. I want my son to go to high school in this town and get a job in this town. Is this too much to ask?' Linda was the person who clearly crystallised the issue for me: why can't people living in their local regional communities get jobs in their regional communities?

I then went to Moranbah State High School. I visited the shed they have which facilitates apprenticeships and getting jobs in the mining sector. These people are prohibited from working in some mines because of the discriminatory policy. I want these young people to have opportunities. I want these young people to have jobs. The Deputy Premier can sit there and laugh his head off at this, but this is no laughing matter.

Mr Seeney: You're the joke.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Go and speak to Mayor Anne Baker.

Mr Seeney: You are a joke.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Keep going. Keep coming. Go on. I don't care. You are incapable of listening. Your arrogance knows no bounds.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please direct your comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to commend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister for mines, the member for Bundamba, who have been visiting these regional towns at length and developing this policy with the communities. This is a policy that is reflective of the needs of the community. It would not be tolerated in Brisbane to be told you cannot get a job down the road because you have a particular postcode. Why is it being tolerated in Moranbah?

Our policy also encompasses another serious issue in relation to fly-in fly-out workers and that is the issue of mental health. In my local electorate I have people who come to talk to me about the effects of fly-in fly-out work on their families. They are passionate about this. They say to me that if they had a choice to go and live closer it would be better for their family. It is hard to be away from your family for up to three weeks at a time. It is emotionally draining on many of these families.

This is about giving workers a very clear choice, which is something that this government is incapable of doing. I commend the *Daily Mercury* for running a very clear campaign on this issue, because it has impacts in Mackay and Rockhampton. People living in Mackay and Rockhampton are prohibited from working in those mines, which is only a 2½-hour drive away. Now we will hear what

the Deputy Premier has to say. He was more than happy to smile for the cameras of the *Daily Mercury*, which stated, 'Seeney says no to 100 per cent FIFO.' Deputy Premier, we are looking forward to your words of wisdom tonight. I ask honourable members: isn't it right that we are looking forward to hearing words of wisdom from the Deputy Premier? What will the Premier Deputy Premier tell the *Daily Mercury*? Did he tell the truth? I challenge the Deputy Premier to go out there, sit down, have a cup of tea with Linda and hear it from her directly, because those families are hurting and this policy is discriminatory. The government has had 2½ years to change it and it has done nothing. They should hang their heads in shame. It is a disgrace—

(Time expired)