




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES (COMMON PROVISIONS) BILL

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (9.09 pm): My contribution will focus on the fact that whether we are debating a gas bill or combining a number of acts, as we are with the Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Bill, we are always talking about the tension between agriculture and mining. There will always be tension. It will never be resolved. Those things always need to be in balance. Unfortunately, the pendulum has swung too far and too heavily in favour of the mining industry. I have always thought I was a strong, probably too strong, advocate for the mining industry at the expense of the agriculture industry. This sort of legislation makes me wonder where I stand in that spectrum. It rolls too far one way and will adversely affect landholders across the state and slap them in the face.

The first provision of the bill that was highlighted over and over again in the submissions was the one related to the notification and objection to mining developments for near neighbours. There are countless examples of this very issue being manifested in terms of all mining development. There are inadvertent effects on farms that are not directly affected by a mine.

I had a phone call from a friend from college who has moved out into one of the gas areas. He said, 'I am not sure how this works for me because the whole community fabric has been decimated due to the impacts of mining. No doubt there are some positive impacts from mining for the community, but it has really destroyed our way of life. Our property, which was once marketable because it was located in a good community, now has haulage trucks on the front road. There are so many adverse effects from having the mines in that vicinity. They have negatively impacted on our lifestyle.' Those things are very hard to quantify and often very hard to compensate for. The cumulative effect of devaluing properties in those regions will have an impact when it comes time for compensation.

They are very real impacts and often very intangible impacts. It is very difficult for small landholders to take the giants in mining to court. It is all about balance. They need a lot of leverage from government and legislation to allow them to have some chance in this regard.

It makes me mad to read in these submissions that a consensus was reached and there have been no disputes. That is because there is always that implied threat. A landholder does not want to go to court. He cannot afford it and he is too scared. Everyone says it is a great outcome because they have reached a peaceful resolution. It is not. There is an implied threat from large corporates that always exists. This sort of legislation is supposed to provide that balance.

Some 90 per cent of submissions were against these objections. We are going to hurt. This is going to ruin that balance. This is going to make us hurt and ruin our way of life. This bill goes too far and it has destroyed the balance once again.

Mr John Erbacher talked in his submission about being an unwilling vendor in many cases. That is the point I alluded to before. It was raised by the member for Gaven, I believe, in estimates. These properties are now being valued for compensation in a depressed market. So we have an

unwilling vendor who has a valuer coming along to look at their property in a depressed market. They are very unfavourable conditions for going through this process. Any sort of tipping of the scales back in favour of mining companies will negatively impact on the agriculture industry.

I understand the impetus for this sort of bill. The state is in trouble and it needs an adrenaline shot for the economy. If you are out of ideas all you have is the mining industry. We have opportunities in this state for agriculture. We have opportunities with ethanol. We had opportunities with the fair milk mark to deliver some stimulus to the dairy industry. We have many opportunities with the ARDB to help rescue the cattle industry and farming. If we are not going to take those opportunities, things will not improve.

Agriculture is the poor cousin to mining. It would probably make sense to pass this sort of legislation if there were no alternative industries. Unfortunately, probably a lot of people are happy to walk away from the land as the conditions are so bad in agriculture. There is no support for the cattle industry. It is tough for them. I can understand the logic driving this sort of legislation. It makes a lot of sense. If all we have to fall back on is mining then of course we would write legislation that heavily favours the mining industry and helps stimulate it. It would probably then be a good idea. It is my contention that there is a lot that we should be doing for agriculture at the same time. If we did that then we would not have to go down this path and make these changes that will heavily impact business and people's way of life.

The other part of the bill that I want to talk about is the removal of key infrastructure. It has been spoken about before. Most of the points are self-evident in terms of the wording. If we take away stock waters, we restrict stock waters or yards or if they are impacted from pipelines nearby we render a property useless. On cattle properties we used to draw a radius of two or three kilometres around a watering point. All of the feed out of there was rendered useless. If they cannot get those watering points they are in trouble.

The removal of key infrastructure from restricted land is going to have very significant effects on people. There are cases that come to mind. There are not a lot of these cases in my electorate. The cases that come to mind were that of Tim Perkins at Chinchilla with gas. He could not reach any suitable compensation for his place. Most of the impacts were not directly adjacent to his property but still impacted on his property. We speak of water and environmental impacts. They are exactly the sorts of things that this bill is now not protecting. Tim Perkins already did not feel protected but we are making it harder for him.

There is also the case of Garry Read at Coral Creek. His water was impacted by the actions of QCoal. After their original approval they expanded the operation and rendered large portions of his property useless because they impacted the watercourse.

There are real examples. It sends a terrible signal to a lot of these landholders. Most of the landholders are traditional LNP voters. They are very confused. They have still gone to the trouble to get angry and write submissions because they object to the things being done. I think a lot of the language is fairly moderate. You can see the points they are making are very strong.

What we are seeing here is a manifestation of the tension between the resources industry and agriculture. We have seen from this government that agriculture is the poor cousin of mining. We are rolling out mining because it is seen as the only answer for the economy. It is wrong. We need agriculture in the long-term. It will always be the one to carry us through and sit there in the background. This is a slap in the face for those in agriculture. They have enough trouble at the moment anyway. To do this is a slap in the face.