




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 29 October 2015

INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Notice

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (11.49 am): I also would like to put on record my thanks to the secretariat for the hard work they provided as we toured around Queensland. The investigation into fly-in fly-out workforces in Queensland is a very important one. I thank the chairman, Jim Pearce, the member for Mirani, and the deputy chairman, Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh. I also acknowledge my fellow committee members—the members for Gladstone, Dalrymple and Keppel—and I thank everyone who testified to the committee. Your experiences and your knowledge has been most valuable.

This report has been keenly awaited by my constituents, because Gregory is home to several resource towns in the Bowen Basin. I did find it a little bit disappointing that the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines received a report into the economic impacts of fly-in fly-out from his appointed panel on 31 July but the parliamentary committee did not have a chance to see that until 2 October. I believe this held up the committee's deliberations a little bit.

The committee's report recommended that the Office of the Coordinator-General undertake meaningful monitoring of the outcomes of the EIS conditioning. We have also stressed the need for the collection of clear data by the Coordinator-General, the Queensland statistician and the ABS. None of the recommendations are intended to be onerous for proponents, but from a government's point of view it is futile to pass laws or set requirements if compliance is not monitored. With proper monitoring and reporting, we might actually learn something new.

In the public chatter about fly-in fly-out workforces, some have brushed away community fears about 100 per cent fly-in fly-out, stating that no mine operates on such a basis. I think that misses the point. The minister's panel said that over half the mines in the Bowen Basin—23 out of 41—are operating with non-resident workforces of 70 per cent or more. I believe that many people will find that startling; it is much greater than is commonly believed. It shows the wisdom of some testimony that we heard at the Emerald public hearing, where it was pointed out that if only 10 per cent of the current fly-in fly-out workers transiting through the Emerald airport became residents it would stabilise the property market and the local economy. I believe it would also strengthen our councils' rate bases and also underwrite our front-line public services in health, police, education and roads.

As a Central Queenslander, I have seen the positive development brought by the resource industry and I consider myself a friend of the mining industry. Equally, I am not against fly-in fly-out. Applied intelligently, it can be used to defend our local economies against global price cycles. I believe the intelligent management of the resource industry can build a legacy of settlement and social development for our future. When regional Queensland thrives, all of Queensland thrives because it unlocks our wealth. When the proportion of fly-in fly-out is too large, it means that we are abandoning regional Queensland.

Finally, I earnestly hope that the state government, the mining companies, the unions, the local governments and the local communities will take up the challenge to work together to actively promote the good points about a resident lifestyle in the wonderful part of the world which I come from, which is Gregory, a part of the Bowen Basin. Making converts to great resident workforces is the most beneficial change we can make for everyone.