




Speech By
Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Record of Proceedings, 24 August 2017

COAL WORKERS' PNEUMOCONIOSIS SELECT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take note

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (12.24 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this debate of the motion to take note of the report of the select committee on the inquiry into the reidentification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland. A little over 12 months ago, in August 2016, the Leader of the Opposition moved a motion in this House calling on the government to establish a commission of inquiry into the re-emergence of black lung disease in coal workers in Queensland. That motion was not agreed to, but an amendment moved by the member for Mirani to instead establish a parliamentary select committee for the same purpose was carried. This is the report that the committee produced that we are discussing today.

The contribution from the member for Southern Downs to this debate mentioned that in 2004 there was a diagnosis of a former coalmine worker with coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland. Two years later there were two instances of former coalmine workers who were paid out sums of money from the workers compensation scheme in Queensland, but the fact is that it was only when the Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health's annual 2015 report made mention of the fact that there was potential for a re-emergence of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland that Queensland really woke up and Queenslanders were alerted to the potential for this insidious disease to come back in Queensland.

Last year when the motion passed this House to establish this select committee I pointed out, in support of the Leader of the Opposition's motion, that historically in Queensland it had been royal commissions that had been the catalyst for change to improve workplace health and safety legislation in Queensland with respect to the resources sector and in other jurisdictions as well. There had been some tragic disasters in Queensland's mining history which, although very rich and profitable for the state, also contain a number of tragedies. There were a number of royal commissions that changed fundamentally the way that resource industries were governed in relation to workplace health and safety.

I think that this select committee report and the select committee will be compared favourably in the future to those infamous royal commissions that delivered great leaps forward in mine safety and health legislation in Queensland. We have heard testimony from participants in the select committee, both members of the committee and people who participated in the process, that it has crossed party lines, it has put politics aside. The committee has taken an extraordinary volume of evidence from everyone involved in the resources sector and now there is a very significant report that has been tabled in the House, report No. 52 of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee, that it is now the responsibility of this House to take forward.

The member for Southern Downs acknowledged in his contribution that the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines was working diligently to implement the findings of the Monash review. It has been clear from his contributions to the parliament that the minister

is taking seriously his responsibility to progress those recommendations from the Monash review. That review was well done and went to the core of the technical issues and the occupational health issues involved in this matter. The recommendations in the select committee's report are wider, they have some more significant ramifications for how the workplace health and safety framework for the resources sector in Queensland is organised, and it would be well for all members to give the content of this report consideration and make that a priority for themselves in the lead-up to debate on the bill.