



Speech By  
**Andrew Cripps**

**MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

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Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2017

**MOTION**

**Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee, Report**

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (6.00 pm): I move—

That this House—

1. notes the importance of the recommendations by the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee in its report No. 2 *Black lung white lies: inquiry into the re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland* to all former and current coal workers being considered as quickly as practicable; and
2. orders the Premier and Minister for the Arts to produce to the House by noon, Friday 8 September 2017 a full government response to the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee's report No. 2 *Black lung white lies: inquiry into the re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland*.

The LNP has carefully considered the need to move this motion at this time and give the House an opportunity to express a view on this matter. This motion follows the Minister for Mines writing to the Clerk on 28 August 2017 to give notice that the Palaszczuk government's response to the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report, which was due by 29 August 2017, would be delayed by three months until 29 November 2017. This motion is carefully worded. It does not condemn the Minister for Mines; nor does it condemn the Palaszczuk government. The motion asks the House to note the importance of recommendations in the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report to current and former coalmine workers and seeks to direct the Premier to provide a full government response to the select committee's report No. 2 by 12 noon this Friday, 8 September 2017, and I will now outline the reasons it does so.

During the last sitting week the House debated and unanimously passed the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to make preparations to support current and former coalmine workers who may be affected by CWP. We also know that updated regulations that commenced on 1 January 2017 made changes relating to dust management, reporting and medical assessments for coalmine workers. The Minister for Mines has also addressed the House on several occasions about what he has done in response to the reidentification of CWP in Queensland. The minister told us in March this year that the government has not been idle and has indeed 'thrown the kitchen sink at this issue', to quote him directly. The minister has reported on his consideration of the recommendations in the Monash report and told us that chest X-rays now meet the ILO standard and that CWP is now a notifiable disease.

We make no criticism of those matters. However, in considering all of those messages of reassurance and statements outlining the progress that the Palaszczuk government has reportedly made, the news that there would now be a delay in providing the House with a full government response to the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report No. 2, tabled on 29 May 2017, is curious and the House now has an opportunity to scrutinise the reasoning offered by the minister.

Let us consider the time frames and the events involved. The recommendations in the report of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee tabled in the House on 29 May this year did not sneak up on the Palaszczuk government. The select committee was established by resolution of the House on 15 September last year—almost 12 months ago—and an interim report was tabled in March this year—almost six months ago. Similarly, the recommendations of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report No. 2 have not taken the Palaszczuk government by surprise. It was tabled on 29 May this year. It has been available to the Palaszczuk government for more than three months. The report contains recommendations proposing changes to the regulatory system relating to coalmine workers.

In contrast, the extended terms of reference granted to the select committee in March relate to the occupational respirable coaldust exposure of port, rail and power station workers and workers potentially exposed to silica dust during silica sandmining, transport and processing. As such, the view of the mines minister that the report relating to the extended terms of reference needs to be tabled before the government responds is difficult to justify. The Palaszczuk government can respond fully to the recommendations relating to coalmine workers. Further, the consideration of the parliamentary Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee of the exposure draft Mine Safety and Health Authority Bill 2017 would benefit from a government response to the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report No. 2 being made available at this time.

With all the resources available to the Palaszczuk government and the repeated assertions by the Minister for Mines that the government has been taking action, the reasons offered for delaying a full government response to the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee report No. 2 do not ring true. The House has driven decision-making on this matter. It established the select committee during the debate on a motion moved by the LNP. It selected its terms of reference to extend the committee's report on a motion moved by the select committee chair. Now the House can express a view about the proposal by the Minister for Mines to delay the reporting date by three months. This date was determined by section 107 of the Parliament of Queensland Act, not by the LNP, the select committee or even the CLA. That requirement was also known to the Palaszczuk government more than three months ago and is another thing that has not snuck up on it or taken it by surprise. For those reasons, I urge all members to support the motion before the House.