



Speech By
Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (COAL WORKERS' PNEUMOCONIOSIS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (8.01 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Along with the speaker before me, I have been a representative of the CWP Select Committee from the beginning. All my colleagues, including the member for Greenslopes, and I have seen and heard firsthand the stories of coalminers, former coalminers, family members and current miners. We have heard the stories of their journey from one day being a healthy worker and the next day being told that they have CWP, or black lung.

I have been relatively impressed with the Office of Industrial Relations, which followed this process closely. They were there on day one of our hearings and heard some remarkable evidence that the member for Southern Downs covered in respect of the early notifications well before other departments were aware of it. They also followed us to a number of hearings across Queensland. I remember having a number of conversations with departmental reps. It was good to see that the Office of Industrial Relations was involved in this process along the line. Many times they were just sitting quietly in the background taking notes but all the time they were soaking up the same evidence and emotion that we were also seeing and feeling. I think that was very important. Sometimes being there and seeing the tears and hearing the evidence from workers, from wives and from family members about the impacts on them is far more important than just reading *Hansard*.

While the select committee was still pulling apart CWP piece by piece and trying to determine where it all went wrong, I was pleased to see that the Office of Industrial Relations had already started working on new legislation, which we are obviously debating tonight, to fix the gap that was evident with current and former coalminers to access their medical examinations, payments for medical examinations, disease progression implications in later life, the ability to reopen their workers compensation claims and a new lump sum payment on a graduated scale using ILO guidelines for miners who have a CWP diagnosis and do not have any permanent impairment.

As I mentioned before, the CWP Select Committee felt the raw emotion from workers and families. Whilst this House is yet to determine the outcomes from the select committee, it is good to see that the Office of Industrial Relations and the Minister for Industrial Relations have taken the lead. They have established the community reference groups, consulted with our select committee and brought us up to speed with this in the early stages of the bill preparation. They have been following this process from the beginning. It is important that the decision is made to act early in the best interests of our coalminers, many of whom are awaiting news of X-rays and assessments, some of whom are yet to be X-rayed and assessed and, unfortunately, some of whom have CWP but do not know it yet. I think it is important we do this tonight for them.

In closing, I want to make reference to one thing—and the minister mentioned it earlier in his second reading speech—which is establishing a B reader program. I want to make it very clear that overwhelming evidence was presented to the select committee about a B reader program and making

sure that it is robust, that it is in line with Dr Bob Cohen's team and the ILO standards and that it is in no way, shape or form watered down. There have been statements from different people throughout the process that, yes, we have B readers here and we have them there. However, we know that is certainly not the case. Any cheap, easy or half-attempt at a fix on this is doomed to fail. If they are not absolutely, categorically clear B readers to Bob Cohen's standard, we will end up going down the same road we have been on for the past 20 or so years. With that, I congratulate the department. I commend the bill to the House.