




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE COMMUNITIES BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.52 pm): I rise to support the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Bill. One of the great pleasures of being a member of parliament is meeting the many new people you come across. By far one of the best people that I have met in my time here has been the member for Mirani. He is a terrific fighter for his community and he has clearly been shaped by the experiences that he has had in his long life. The member for Mirani was the first person to make me very aware of this issue and he has stood up on many occasions in many forums and spoken about this issue.

Last year when I had the really great privilege to be a part of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee I had the opportunity to tour through many of the communities that the member for Mirani represents which he had been talking about, so I had the opportunity to see firsthand the concerns that have been raised by the member for Mirani. I came away convinced that what he had been talking about and the concerns that he had been raising were very valid and very real and having very negative impacts on the people whom he represents. It made me realise that the member for Mirani was right in that something needed to be done about this and I am glad that this bill is heading in the right direction.

I will never forget spending that time in Middlemount. In fact, I jogged around the town with the member for Southern Downs and the member for Barron River. We saw empty houses, people struggling and shops shutting down. We spoke to local people and they were very distressed by some of the things that were going on in their town. Over the years I have had the privilege to work with many nurses who have had partners involved in fly-in fly-out mining and the impacts I saw on my professional colleagues were quite significant and quite real. Some families handled it well because it was something that they chose to do, but other families were not so lucky. They were involved in fly-in fly-out simply because they had no other options. I remember one colleague in particular who would have liked to have moved closer to where her partner was working and enrol her kids in local schools and she had the capacity to get work there in the nursing field but was unable to do so because of the employment structure. That is a great tragedy.

Oftentimes people will say, 'People do this because it's their choice.' It is true that in some cases that may be their choice, but realistically for many other people there is no real choice. Their only choice is to have no job or take that job, and many workers have no doubt found themselves in that situation at times. Our movement understands that. We understand what that means for working people. In fact, the genesis of our movement was really a reaction against workers having limited or no choice in what they do. We have understood right throughout our entire history that workers cannot be treated just like any other input into the business. We cannot treat them like a widget. We cannot treat them like a roll of wire. We cannot treat them like finance or capital. We cannot treat workers that way because workers at the end of the day before they are a worker are a mum, are a sister, are a dad, are a brother. They are a human being and we cannot treat these people in this way, and we have always recognised that in this movement.

There has been a myth perpetuated—and it is a myth that we have all bought into over many years—that this is the way things have to be done and that this is the way we have to structure our work. We are going to grapple with this in coming years, because more and more large organisations and large corporations are telling us, ‘This is the way that we have to do it.’ The reality is that this is the way we choose to do it because this is the way we absolutely maximise profits and at the end of the day the people who suffer are those working people. This bill is starting to tackle that very deep issue. We have a choice and as legislators we have a choice tonight to enact legislation that will deal with that very issue and will treat workers like people.

I want to acknowledge the minister for his fine work on this bill. He does the heavy lifting. The member for Keppel mentioned that heavy lifting earlier and I want to echo that sentiment. The minister has done extremely heavy lifting on this bill. It is a difficult and tricky issue because everyone is telling us that it is impossible and it cannot be done, but he has done it. The minister has done it. I have seen his fine work here. I see the fine work that he is doing in relation to CWP. He is a minister who is doing the right thing and is working hard and I commend the minister. I also want to commend members of the committee for this report and thank them very much for putting it together. Mostly I hope that this bill passes the House and gives those workers in that industry the opportunity to be treated like people, to make real choices, for some of them to choose to live in their communities, to build their communities and to make a real contribution in the towns that they live in. I commend the bill to the House.