




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 24 August 2017

STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE COMMUNITIES BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.36 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Bill 2016. Communities in regional Queensland, and especially the small towns of the Bowen Basin, have been suffering from the scourge of the commonly known practice of FIFO. FIFO, when forced onto workers, is socially, emotionally and economically devastating. The workers suffer and the townships suffer. One hundred per cent FIFO takes away the choice from workers about where they can live. The large mining companies forcing 100 per cent FIFO on workers are showing they have no moral or ethical commitment to the surrounding communities in which they operate.

There are many problems with FIFO, not just for workers and their families, but also for councils in the region of the mining operations. I will outline some of the issues that have been raised with me. Local councils have been left providing infrastructure and services for a large number of people moving and staying casually in the region. The workers are not permanent and they do not pay rates. They take their wages back to their own communities. Councils are left with collecting rubbish, building roads and providing water and sewerage services. This is a huge impost on townships with no monetary gain. The FIFO workers also access local hospitals and emergency services, putting further stress on local services. The services that are in those towns are only built for the small number of people who live there permanently.

Mining companies, or the companies running the work camps for the mining companies, often do not even try to support their local communities by using local suppliers or producers. Supplies are often trucked in, putting more pressure on the road systems, while workers go from the airport to the mine camp, making no purchases in town.

Sadly, I have spoken personally with workers who have been sent letters from their mining employer giving them two choices. Some people would think it is good to get two choices, but the choices have been: (1) move to a specific set of postcodes away from Central Queensland; or (2) start looking for another job. These letters were being sent to workers based in Mackay at the height of the mining downturn. If you lose your job, you probably will not get another one. A lot of people bought their homes at peak prices. If they chose to sell up and move on—that is if somebody bought their house—they would be looking at huge losses. If they chose to stay in Mackay they may not get another job or, if they could get another job, it would be on a lower salary or it would be intermittent work and they may lose their home.

Established workers were being forced away from their family, support and friends. Children were being pulled away from their schools and peer groups. Some workers were faced with the situation of having to fly from Central Queensland to Brisbane and back again so that they could keep their job. They needed to show that they had left the centre to keep their job. They did this so that they did not have to uproot their families. One Sunday morning I ran into an old friend of mine. They were having a going-away breakfast for their adult daughter and son-in-law. Both were mining engineers and they, too, had been given a letter. It did not matter what job you did on a mining site, you were getting the move-on letters.

The amendments in this bill extending the prohibition of 100 per cent FIFO workforces to all existing and future large resource projects where there is a nearby regional community, regardless of when the project was approved, and also expanding the definition of a 'large resource project' beyond those projects with an environmental impact statement to include projects with an environmental authority and 100 or more workers will be good for our communities. This bill supports communities and it supports their workers. In closing, I would like to thank the work of the member for Mirani, Jim Pearce. He has been a true stalwart for miners and their families. I commend the bill to the House.