



Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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ADJOURNMENT

New Hope Acland Coalmine

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (12.53 am): Today I rise once again to speak of issues that are affecting the town of Oakey in the electorate of Condamine. Once again the residents of Oakey and surrounding areas have been severely impacted by circumstances beyond their control. Members in this place have heard me speak of the protracted battle the residents have been engaged in regarding the water contamination issue that has emanated from the defence base devaluing property prices and the reputation of the town. These residents now have another uncertainty hanging over their heads. I speak specifically of the recent Land Court decision regarding the approval process for stage 3 of the New Hope Acland mine. The Land Court's recommendation that the mining lease for stage 3 of the mine be rejected has caught many in the Oakey community by surprise. The common belief in the community was that stage 3 would be passed but with strict conditions. The reasoning for this train of thought is easy to understand, as New Hope has been mining continuously at Acland since 2001 and had been granted two stages during that time.

The approval process for Acland stage 3 began 10 years ago. After lodging a revised plan, the Coordinator-General granted approval with conditions in December 2014. The federal Minister for the Environment and Energy, the Hon. Josh Frydenberg, commissioned an independent scientific assessment into the project. On the basis of that evidence, the EPBC was approved in January this year.

The project has been the subject of the longest Land Court hearing in the 120-year history of the Land Court, and that decision of the court was that the ML and EA not be approved. Given that the project had Coordinator-General and federal government approvals and some concerns over the Land Court process, I have been informed this afternoon that New Hope have lodged an application for a judicial review of the decision, so this saga is still far from over and I think raises serious issues about the approval and objection process for approvals in this state both for the resource and agriculture sector. This fiasco can never be allowed to be repeated. I have nothing but sympathy for all caught up in the uncertainty that this process has caused.

The water contamination and compensation issue for affected residents at Oakey has still not been resolved. I would urge the defence department to finalise this issue as a matter of the utmost urgency and at least get one of the uncertainties out of the lives of the residents of Oakey. The residents of Oakey have been sorely tested in recent times and they deserve a break.