




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE COMMUNITIES BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (5.16 pm): I rise in the House to speak to the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Bill and to support the passing of this very important piece of legislation. The bill deals with fly-in fly-out and other long distance community work practices in regional Queensland. It is a very important piece of legislation to address the exploitation of not only coal workers but also families and businesses that form part of the community in regional Queensland.

I first became aware of the serious social impact on regional communities, especially those in the Bowen Basin, as chair of the Finance and Administration Committee when we visited these communities during our committee's inquiry into the labour hire industry. Whilst we received many stories of exploitation of workers in the mining community, it became obvious to me that both labour hire and fly-in fly-out have contributed to the demise of any social cohesion in these rural communities.

It was during one of these hearings that I had the opportunity to hear evidence from Kim Sinclair, and I will highlight some of the issues that Kim raised with me during our inquiry into labour hire. I recently phoned Kim to refresh my memory of some of the real issues facing people and businesses in regional Queensland. Kim lives in Moranbah. She is a mother and a miner. She lives at Moranbah with her husband and two daughters, Mia and Isla. She has been out of the industry for about 4½ years but she wants to start working back in the industry she knows. Kim can see the entrance to the mine from where she lives. She can see it in operation but she cannot work at the mine as it has a fly-in fly-out only policy. She would have to fly to Brisbane and then travel to Moranbah and return the same way, even though the camp is literally 15 minutes from her home. She would have to perform fly-in fly-out in order to gain paid employment in the career of her choice. Kim has witnessed families going through the same situation. Families are having to leave home in order to get paid employment of a permanent nature. It is tearing families and communities apart.

Kim has lived in Moranbah for 14 years and is a long-term community member. She moved there to raise her family. Kim buried her mother in the Moranbah cemetery and she says that to have to leave Moranbah to find employment would cause her great sadness. Kim has also witnessed the impact on businesses. She has watched one after the other shutting their doors. Because there are fewer people in the town, the money is not there either. The town as a whole is suffering. Prices have to be increased in order for businesses to sustain their premises, but as there is no money coming in from consumers people have to leave town. It is a double-whammy effect. The towns that are affected are Moranbah, Dysart, Middlemount, Coppabella, Nebo, Clermont and Tieri. Any region shown on a map of the Bowen Basin would be affected.

Kim says that it goes even further. For a few years FIFO has affected the greater communities of Mackay, Townsville and Brisbane. It impacts families in the metropolitan cities, because it changes family dynamics. Of the large number of FIFO workers, most are male. Dad has to fly from home to access work, which causes stress on families. Mostly, that work is not permanent. FIFO affects not just the regional areas with which it is usually associated; it also affects the metropolitan areas.

Kim has also noticed that there are not enough kids for the local footy club to fill a team and that young people have limited access to sport. She told me that her four-year-old wanted to participate in Little Athletics, but because they no longer have as many kids in town they cannot run athletics every week. Each week they decide whether or not it is run and it depends on whether they have enough kids. A similar situation exists with swimming lessons and ballet classes. It gets harder and harder to take children to such casually run things and they also have difficulty finding trainers.

Kim has also noticed the impact on local services, such as hospital and dental services. She says that sometimes getting an appointment with her GP proves difficult. As a community member and a local resident, it is annoying and frustrating for her to be unable to access services that people in metropolitan areas take for granted. She also notes that money is not staying in town but is taken back to the hometowns of the workers.

Kim says that for her the main thing is that she usually comes at it from a casualisation perspective. FIFO is the biggest thing that affects her. While it used to be a preferred method of employment, now people do not have a choice. They cannot sustain and grow the community. For Kim, the FIFO bill represents the ability to have a choice; it does not represent the ability to abolish FIFO as that may not suit every family's needs. She says that not having to move away from a close community, enabling the family to stay together, would be a good start. Marriages have been breaking down and children are left behind. Families are unable to make the choice that would best suit that family.

I ask those opposite to stand up, be counted and support this bill. This bill is about looking after communities and the people who live in those communities. This is something that the LNP falls short on, time and time again. The LNP would be best known as the party that has no heart or social conscience when it comes to dealing with the big end of town. The LNP would rather keep their big business mates on side than vote for legislation that would make better the lives of regional Queenslanders.

When one reads the report by the Public Works and Utilities Committee, one sees that a lot of the issues that Kim raises are the types of issues that the committee heard about. I thank the member for Mirani and chair of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, Jim Pearce, for his hard work in this area. I know how passionate he is about workers in the coal industry and how hard he works to ensure that his community has a voice in this House. I commend the bill to the House.