




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (5.55 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis and Other Legislation) Amendment Bill. I thank my fellow committee members, who worked diligently on this bill. I also take the opportunity to say that just occasionally we can come together in this great chamber and do great things for the people of Queensland. I am very proud to be part of the debate tonight. As the member for Kawana said—I have heard other members say this in the past—no-one deserves to get up in the morning and go to their place of employment and either tragically not come home that night or receive some sort of a disease that may over the long term materially affect their health.

The committee of which I am proud to be a part made several recommendations. I will concentrate briefly on the objectives of the bill. Most importantly, that was to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 to provide access for coal workers with any concerns about coal workers' pneumoconiosis or a coalmine dust lung disease to a medical examination through the workers compensation scheme. It will also allow workers with pneumoconiosis, including coal workers' pneumoconiosis, to reopen their statutory claim to receive further lump sum compensation if their condition indeed deteriorates. Furthermore, it will introduce additional lump sum compensation for workers diagnosed with pneumoconiosis, including coal workers' pneumoconiosis, silicosis or asbestosis, from working in a dusty environment. It also seeks to amend the Industrial Relations Act 2016 to clarify, finally, that the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission cannot grant a stay of a decision that is subject to appeal under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003.

The committee also considered amendments sought to be made to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to establish an affected persons committee involving injured workers and families of persons who have died as a result of work incidents and provide advice to the minister on the information and support for those who most need it. I take a leaf from the minister's book and acknowledge anyone listening to the debate in the public gallery tonight whose family members have been affected over the years or continue to be affected.

The re-emergence of black lung disease is a complete tragedy. Whilst we do not yet know the full work findings of the select committee, I do know that the members for Bundamba and Southern Downs, amongst others, continue to show a great degree of diligence in the work they are doing in this important area of public policy. I know from being on the committee that a total of eight submissions were received from six stakeholders including the Queensland Council of Unions, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, the Queensland Resources Council, the Association of Self Insured Employers of Queensland, JBS Australia and the Queensland Law Society.

The re-emergence of black lung disease in our coalmining industry should absolutely be above politics. It is a fundamental issue about the health and safety of coal workers throughout the state. We on this side of the House are strong and united in our support for the coal industry—always have been and always will be—particularly in terms of energy security and also regional development and regional

jobs. Whilst the economic imperative will always be there, at the end of the day something that does trump economics is the material safety and wellbeing of the Queenslanders that we are very proud in our 89 state seats to represent. I am very proud and pleased to be able to lend my support to this particular bill tonight.