




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MINES LEGISLATION (RESOURCES SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.56 pm): The member for Condamine alleges that the LNP is the best friend of mining workers and that Labor is no friend of mining workers. We have to remind those opposite that they are the ones who over many, many years have stripped miners of so many rights. Let's talk about Work Choices. Let's talk about how they removed the rights of unions to enter sites to ensure that those sites were safe. Let's talk about how the LNP refused to visit those miners at Oaky North and instead went and met with the mine bosses. There is a long list of examples of where the LNP has failed workers, including mining workers, in this state. The member for Condamine and those opposite ought to be reminded of all of those examples before they start praising themselves for being the best friends of mining workers in this state.

I am proud to rise and support this bill which will enhance safety and health for all mineworkers, including contractors and workers in small mines. The priority initiatives in the Mines Legislation (Resources Safety) Amendment Bill were first presented to this House on 7 September 2017. That bill was referred to the then infrastructure, planning and natural resources committee of which I was a member, but it lapsed when parliament was dissolved prior to the last election. I am really pleased to see this bill back on the *Notice Paper* and before the House today.

The intervening period has provided further opportunity for consultation with key stakeholders in order to add to the extensive and ongoing consultation to date for many of the initiatives. This bill will ensure that Queensland's mining safety laws continue to support all workers to get home safely to their families. That is first and foremost the priority of the bill that we are debating.

The reidentification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis highlights the need for continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks so that every worker goes home safely. This bill will deliver initiatives to ensure additional safety and health measures are in place to protect Queensland's miners and includes minor amendments to support the government's response to the Monash University review of the respiratory component of the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme. Queensland's mining safety and health legislation continues to be regarded as amongst the best in the world, but we must be vigilant and we should aim to continually improve Queensland's mining safety and health record.

These laws include reform initiatives that increase compliance powers for the mine safety and health inspectorate, demand greater transparency and accountability, and require better safety and health systems from operators. The bill will importantly provide increased maximum penalties for breaches of safety and health obligations and civil penalties for serious safety and health breaches. I understand that those maximum penalties have not been increased since 2007, so it is timely that they are being addressed. The bill will provide increased powers to suspend or cancel statutory certificates of competency if holders fail to meet their obligations as well as improved integration of contractor safety and health management in the one single safety and health management system at a mine.

The department's Mines Inspectorate through its investigations has found that one of the causes of an increase in risk is due to contractors not having a full understanding of the safety and health management system on the mining site. Last year when I met with the workers at Oaky North who had been locked out for 230 days by Glencore, that was front and centre of their concerns. The permanent workers were concerned first and foremost about the safety of the contractors employed by Glencore to work on the mine due to a lack of understanding of the safety and health management systems on that site.

Coalmine ventilation officers will also have to hold a certificate of competency through examination by the Board of Examiners, and minerals ventilation officers will be a statutory position. Importantly, this bill will now also require that small opal or gem mines with five or more workers have a safety and health management system in place. Whilst those mines usually have a very small workforce, I have no doubt that workers on those mine sites will be incredibly pleased to have legislation that requires those sites to have a safety and health management system in place.

These improvements reinforce the Palaszczuk government's commitment to the safety and health of Queensland's mineworkers. Many of those workers live and raise their families in my electorate of Keppel and either drive or fly out to their respective mines in Central Queensland. I know there are many of them who are very pleased to see that the Palaszczuk government is continuing to monitor health and safety in this state and monitor health and safety of their work sites.

The department will continue to look at ways to improve the safety of our workers by ensuring legislation is effective and contemporary and by continuing to consult with stakeholders. I think workplace health and safety is an ongoing, evolving issue that needs to be addressed on mine sites. It is not something that we can legislate for now and expect that 20 years later this legislation will be fit. We will have to keep monitoring it.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to the safety and health of all workers across all industries, because all workers have the right to expect that their safety and health will be protected while at work. If you meet any family who has lost someone on a work site, their heart is broken. That is why we are continuing to strengthen safety and health protections for workers so that workers do not fear that workplace risks or hazards will injure them, make them ill or worse. I commend the bill to the House.