




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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MINES LEGISLATION (RESOURCES SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (2.19 pm): I rise to lend my support to the Mines Legislation (Resources Safety) Amendment Bill. In doing so I acknowledge Leanne Linard, the chair of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. Our committee had a busy year and it was wonderful that her committee could step into the breach and conduct this research for us. On behalf of our entire committee I place on record our appreciation for that.

Previous speakers have touched on ventilation officer competencies. As we know, ventilation officers are in a critical safety position in our underground coalmines. The work that they do is very important and it can mean the difference, as we know now, between life and death. They have crucial responsibilities which include overseeing changes in the underground coalmine's ventilation system, monitoring air quality, methane, noxious gases and flammable gases more generally. A ventilation officer is an existing statutory position at the underground coalmine under the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999. This bill increases the oversight of the competencies of the coal ventilation officer by requiring the coal ventilation officer to also have a certificate of competency from the Board of Examiners. This will provide an independent checking process that the ventilation officer for a coalmine has the necessary competencies specified by the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee.

Currently only a coalmine's senior site executive determines whether a ventilation officer has acquired the necessary competencies. Requiring this initial oversight by the Board of Examiners will help to ensure that ventilation officers do have the experience and the competence before they are working at the operational level in what we know are complex and hazardous coalmining operations. It is a more proactive approach at the training stage to assist industry to ensure that a ventilation officer is competent before a ventilation officer is working in a safety critical position in an underground mine.

Requiring a ventilation officer to gain a certificate of competency from the Board of Examiners provides additional assessment by a panel that is primarily from the industry with the relevant mining experience and with the necessary qualifications. The ventilation officers currently in ventilation officer positions at coalmines will have a transitional period of three years to demonstrate to the Board of Examiners that they should be granted this additional qualification of the certificate of competency.

The bill also increases the competency requirements for ventilation officers in underground mineral mines. It introduces a requirement for underground mineral mines with more than 20 underground workers to have that ventilation officer with the competencies specified by the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee as required for the duties and responsibilities of a minerals ventilation officer. This bill is significantly improving competency requirements for the safety critical ventilation officer positions at both underground coal and mineral mines. These amendments will significantly help to ensure the high safety and health ventilation standards in Queensland's underground mines.

I will also touch briefly on the contractor management arrangements and how this bill will move to strengthen and improve those. This bill will make the act significantly clearer about the roles of senior site executives, contractors and other service providers in establishing a single safety and health management system for operations at the mine. The legislation always intended that there be a single safety and health management system developed and maintained for each mine. Coronial recommendations have emphasised the importance of all workers following the same safety critical procedure at the mines. The amendments clarify how senior site executives, contractors and service providers are required to collaborate to ensure that every worker at a coal or mineral mine or quarry, whether a direct employee, contractor or service provider, is part of and is following a mine's single safety and health management system.

The effective management of contractors has been an ongoing concern for a number of years following incidents and near misses due to contractors not following the same critical safety procedures as employees under the single safety and health management system. Over the past decade we know that contractors have been overrepresented in the number of incidents at mines. These amendments will clarify requirements and will help to improve the management of contractors and service providers and consequently the health and safety of all. The changes will also improve the management of contractors by requiring the management structure for the safe operations at a coal or mineral mine or quarry to indicate who is responsible for establishing and implementing a system for managing contractors and service providers at the coal or mineral mine or quarry.

Collectively, the contractor and service provider related amendments will help to ensure the safety and the health of all workers at a coal or mineral mine or quarry as the changes promote improved adherence to safety critical procedures that can potentially affect the safety and health of any worker, not only contractors or service providers. We here know that every worker has the right to go to work and come home safe and that is why I commend this bill to the House.