




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019

MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.24 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Burdekin. We must do everything we can to put an end to the heartbreak that has struck families, friends and colleagues in the mining and quarrying industries. Six deaths in the mining and quarrying industries in the last 12 months in Queensland is an appalling loss of life.

The opposition is here today calling for an inquiry to review mine safety and health legislation, but as we have heard there are two independent reviews already underway and they are due to report to the government by the end of the year. There are two independent reviews, and this is what they will do. They will identify key changes needed to improve health and safety in the state's mines and quarries.

In the first review, the Palaszczuk government has commissioned forensic structural engineer Dr Sean Brady to examine all fatal incidents in Queensland's mines and quarries since 2000. This review will investigate the reasons mine and quarry workers have died over the past 20 years. It is taking the long view over what has happened. It will look at the historic risks and trends and the emerging issues. This review will investigate how companies and industry as a whole can improve from these incidents and it will identify a compliance focus for the Mines Inspectorate.

Secondly and separately, the University of Queensland is conducting a second review commissioned by the Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee and the Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee. In this review, the university is reviewing the state's mining health and safety legislation to ensure it is relevant to current and emerging mine practice and technology. They will consult with industry, unions, mines inspectors and legal experts during the review. We need experts doing these reviews and not politicians, which is the ultimate closed shop review.

There are also two other developments that make this review proposed by the member for Burdekin superfluous. Firstly, the Palaszczuk government has been actively working with these stakeholders to consider bringing the offence of industrial manslaughter to our mining safety legislation. In light of this development, the LNP need to consider whether they would support this and whether they would back this. Industrial manslaughter is already in our safety laws for other industries through workplace health and safety legislation.

The two tripartite mining advisory committees are presently developing advice for Minister Lynham on industrial manslaughter's application in the mining and quarrying industries. This is what real action looks like. This is moving beyond what we could achieve through an extended parliamentary inquiry. It is working with industry to solve the problem. It is action.

Secondly, the Palaszczuk government is currently consulting with stakeholders on a draft bill to establish the resources safety and health regulator as an independent statutory body separate to the facilitation arm of government. It would include an independent commissioner for resources safety and health to provide strategic advice to the minister, to engage with industry to promote safety and health,

and to monitor, review and report on the performance of Resources Safety and Health Queensland. This bill would utilise the independent office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor to ensure independence and efficiency in the prosecution of serious offences under the resources safety and health legislation.

Once again, the question in light of these two extra developments is this: what are the LNP going to do? Are they going to support any future proposed changes to industrial manslaughter laws to extend it to mining and quarrying?

Ms Grace: Don't hold your breath.

Mr WHITING: Well, let us see where they go with that according to what they have done in the past on that. Are they going to support a resources safety bill? The onus should be on the LNP and what they would do in accordance with these two reviews that are coming up and these two other developments which I know are actions designed to help prevent the scourge of workplace health and safety deaths.

Those opposite say they want action now. If that is so, they should tell us if they support those actions. What about the safety resets? They are hugely important. We want to hear how important those opposite feel they are. They are absolutely crucial. I want to hear that they want immediate action on making workplaces safer for our miners. Let's see whether they want to delay action being taken with this parliamentary review or they want to get on and do the work.

(Time expired)