




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019

MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.00 pm): I move—

That this House—

1. directs the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly by 25 November 2019 on the effectiveness of the mine safety regime in Queensland.
2. In undertaking this inquiry, the committee should consider:
 - (a) resourcing and operations of the mine safety inspectorate, including the inspectors in regional Queensland;
 - (b) review the legislative framework to ensure it is the most effective in the world to protect mine workers;
 - (c) why the Palaszczuk government dissolved a Mining Safety Advisory Committee and the impact this has had on Queensland mine safety;
 - (d) the circumstances that have led to six fatalities in Queensland mines and quarries in the last 12 months; and
 - (e) the stories of regional Queenslanders employed in the coalmining industry and their views about the health and safety systems in Queensland.

The natural resources industry is nothing without the people who make up that industry, and this state would be so much worse off without that industry. One in every eight jobs in this state is reliant on the resources sector and, without the resources workers, Queensland does not work. Whether individual members in this place support the resources industry or not, every square metre of this state depends on it. Regardless of where members stand on resources, each and every one of us in this place must stand up for these people.

Six deaths in 12 months in Queensland's mines and quarries is simply not good enough. Not since 1997 has Queensland seen the scale of mining related deaths in this state, and it cannot be allowed to continue. Rightly, Queenslanders want answers. They want answers as to why last year there were 500 fewer mine safety inspections completed than there were four years ago. They want to know whether the department has adequate resources or have they been cut due to cost cutting. They deserve to know how many mine safety inspector roles remain unfilled and why these positions have been allowed to sit vacant while our miners are dying. They deserve to know why gender requirements prevented the advisory committee on mining safety from meeting and they deserve to know why the state's chief inspector recently resigned.

Queenslanders want answers to these questions and more because clearly all is not well with Queensland's mine safety regulator. This is not about blame; it is about getting our mine safety policies right so that lives are protected. The LNP firmly believes that everyone who goes to work deserves the right to be able to come home to their families. That is why as a community we deserve answers to what is happening in our mines and what has gone wrong to cause these incidents.

To set the path for preventing deaths in the resources sector, the only real option is the establishment of a full parliamentary select committee into mine safety. The inquiry needs to be public and it needs to be transparent. We need to hear from industry, from miners and from their communities

in regional Queensland. Miners at the coalface and from the quarries deserve to be heard and we simply must listen. We must, all of us, embrace a process that will get to the bottom of this crisis without fear or favour—a process that is the first step in restoring confidence to our miners and their communities.

Only a bipartisan inquiry with the powers of this parliament will provide the answers that we need. For the minister responsible for this industry to stand here and oppose this motion is nothing short of a disgrace. For the minister to stand in this House and put politics ahead of the safety of miners signals a dark day for workers in the resources sector, a dark day for the communities that they are a part of and a dark day for Queensland.

It is not like we are asking for anything revolutionary. The 2017 bipartisan parliamentary report *Black lung white lies* is a perfect example of members of this House putting politics aside and getting the answers that Queenslanders deserve. Closed shop reviews have no guarantee of delivering the change needed to address this issue. When questions are being asked of the department itself, we must ensure that answers are delivered.

The fact that Queenslanders want answers on mine and quarry safety is reason enough to establish this inquiry. For those members who forget that they are here to represent Queenslanders, let me give you six other reasons: David Routledge, Bradley Hardwick, Jack Gerdes, Connor-Shaye Milne, Adam Malone and Allan 'Big Al' Houston. They are not just names; they are real people with lives and families. They are members of communities throughout this state. They are the victims in Queensland's resources industry in the past 12 months. Rural and regional mining communities deserve better, and mine safety is too important to get wrong. When this motion is voted on, the record will show who in this place values the lives of Queenslanders and who values political point scoring.

The LNP is standing shoulder to shoulder with our miners on this important issue because we know that they deserve the truth and they deserve answers. We also know that they must do whatever is needed to give answers to the families of those six victims and we must take action to ensure that their loss is not in vain. I implore all members of this House to ask themselves one simple question before they vote on this motion: are the lives of the men and women who work in Queensland's resources sector worth protecting? If you answer yes, you must support this motion.