




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019

MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (5.55 pm): I rise to speak against the motion. This is a very serious issue. The motion moved by the opposition is based upon fundamentally wrong assumptions about what has happened. I have sat beside the minister and listened to those opposite speak. This inquiry is being called for by those opposite based on fundamental flaws in their understanding of what is happening in this industry. I have been involved in health and safety as Minister for Industrial Relations and as a proud leader of the union movement in this state for more years than those opposite put together.

I would like to see them being just as passionate when it comes to health and safety in all industries, not just the mining industry. Everything that the Labor Party has done to improve health and safety for all workers in this state has been opposed by those opposite. Everything we have brought into this House has been opposed by those opposite. Opposition members get up in this place under tragic circumstances—I give my condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives, not just in the mines but in all industries in this state. Everybody whose family has lost a loved one has my condolences and my sympathies. It does not just happen in mining. We all know that.

Every time we have come into this House to improve occupational health and safety, to stop their soft inspectorates going out there, namby-pamby, enabling employers—we ignore the fact that employers have the primary responsibility to provide a healthy and safe workplace. Under legislation it is employers who have the primary responsibility for health and safety. We on this side of the House know that no one element can do this alone. We have to work in a tripartite, cooperative relationship—with unions and workers, with government and with employers. They are the three groups that deliver occupational health and safety. Those opposite would not have a clue.

The shadow minister who moved this motion was quoted in a recent newspaper article about industrial manslaughter. In October 2017 when we introduced industrial manslaughter laws, what did those opposite do? They voted against them. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: actions speak louder than words. When the shadow minister was asked about industrial manslaughter he said that it sounds okay in theory but that it could deter people from applying for top jobs because of the consequences should an accident occur. We have had industrial manslaughter provisions in this state since 2017. Where is the evidence that one executive has not taken a job because of industrial manslaughter? I ask those opposite to give me just one example of where an executive has not taken a job because of industrial manslaughter provisions.

The truth is that those opposite are weak on health and safety. They are weak when it comes to workers compensation. They cannot get up in this House and shed crocodile tears for the mining industry and ignore all other industries in this state. Those opposite have never supported health and safety or WorkCover in this state.

When the member for Kawana was the minister, against the recommendations of his own select committee he weakened the WorkCover laws in this state. If we had not removed the threshold, 35 per cent to 40 per cent of miners suffering from coal workers' pneumoconiosis in this state would have been denied common law claims. I think there was one opposition member on that committee. It was stacked with LNP members. That committee still brought in the threshold.

The members opposite should not come into this House crying crocodile tears about how tough they are on health and safety, because they are weak. They have always been weak. The whole time their actions speak louder than words. The minister is at pains to say that that advisory committee met every single time. The members opposite want an inquiry based on a fallacy. The minister has said that audits have increased in health and safety, yet the members opposite still want an inquiry. They are weak, they know it and we are voting against this motion.

(Time expired)