




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (3.53 pm): I rise to contribute to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill's policy objective is to amend a large range of acts to ensure effective and responsive frameworks within mines and energy and to enhance the water compliance frameworks. We are all too aware of the issues that we have with water when there is a lack of it. In my region, agriculture, aquaculture, mining and urban living all compete for valuable water resources. It is important that the water supply that we have is never taken for granted, is allocated wisely and efficiently, and is protected from waste and contamination.

The 2018 independent audit of Queensland non-urban water measurement and compliance, commissioned by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, together with the Murray-Darling Basin Water Compliance Review, identified opportunities to improve Queensland's rural water management. A number of recommendations were made, particularly in relation to information systems, governance and compliance. This bill removes ambiguity from the Water Act in relation to certain offences and strengthens compliance actions.

The backyard to my region is the famous Bowen Basin mining region. The resource industry is important to the economic growth of Central and Northern Queensland. Under the current framework, unlimited renewal of exploration permits along with the ability to vary relinquishment requirements has resulted in some exploration areas being held for too long, delaying production and the associated benefits to Queensland.

The amendments support greater potential for the development of the state's resources through: facilitating land turnover by providing an overall cap of 15 years, including the initial term and renewals, for exploration permits for coal and minerals; providing exploration permit holders and authority to prospect holders flexibility to amend their activities on the ground in line with exploration results through the introduction of outcomes based work programs; and providing exploration permit holders and authority to prospect holders sufficient time to determine which areas need to be retained and which may be relinquished by increasing time before the relinquishment due date.

The resource authority amendments will rebalance land turnover and retention. Capping the overall life of exploration permits for coal and minerals and providing more time before each relinquishment cycle will drive exploration activities and decision-making. This will provide greater confidence in the sector to either turn over land or invest in commercially viable discoveries.

The proposed amendments will maximise flexibility for industry during exploration, reduce administrative burden for both industry and government, and encourage progression to production. There are not proposed changes to other existing safeguards, such as environmental obligations, land access framework requirements and native title processes.

The permit holders that have not finalised exploration by the end of the 15-year period due to an exceptional event, such as a natural disaster, may have the final term extended by up to three years. This is an important amendment for North Queensland and Central Queensland where we see during

some years destructive cyclones and flooding and this year wildfires. In addition, relinquishment requirements will no longer be able to be delayed except in very specific circumstances—for example, in an exceptional event due to an explorer being locked out by an overlapping tenure holder or where a part of an exploration permit is subject to application for a mineral development licence of mining lease. In this situation, relinquishment is deferred until the application has been decided.

The Coordinator-General has signed off on two mining projects in the last couple of weeks in the Bowen Basin—Winchester South, which is about 40 kilometres south of Moranbah, and just today Olive Downs South, which is south-west of Moranbah and the neighbouring mine to Winchester South. The mines will source their workforce, firstly, from the regional mining towns. This will be great for those towns in the Bowen Basin like Moranbah, Clermont and Nebo. Winchester South proponents, Whitehaven, have already started their workforce planning to include displaced workers from mine sites that are at the end of their life.

In the environmental impact statements the Coordinator-General has invoked the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act to ensure local employment. For the first time in Queensland this act has been applied to both the construction and operational sides of the project. The Palaszczuk Labor government is backing in mining projects and mining companies in Queensland. This legislation will enhance the ability for landholders and mining companies in Queensland to do business. I commend the bill to the House.