




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019

MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.19 pm): I rise to support the member for Burdekin's motion. We all agree in this House that one death is one too many, but to have four in the last six months means immediate action needs to be taken. Every miner needs to arrive home safely. They work hard. They play a critical role in building our Queensland economy. The industry is the backbone of our economy, along with agriculture. Queensland miners and their communities deserve answers as to what has been happening in our mines and what has gone wrong to cause these accidents.

The LNP shares the considerable concerns of many Queenslanders about mine safety, and that is why it fully supports the establishment of a parliamentary select committee into the effectiveness of the Queensland government's mine safety regime. The seat I represent has significantly invested in our resources industry. While I do come from agriculture, I have grown up around the mining industry. I have many friends who rely on the industry as a job or who have businesses associated with mining in the Bowen Basin. I can tell you now that there is nothing more chilling when you hear on the radio that there has been an accident at a mine site because people feel that they may know that person. They think, 'Who is it?' Those communities out there are very close.

This is not a blame game. This is about getting our mine safety policies right so lives are saved. The minister said this morning, and I agree with him—

Every time I am at Brisbane Airport, I see mine workers in high-vis heading home, and that is the most important point—that they are heading home to their partners, their children, their parents and their friends, because the most important thing to come off site is a worker.

I absolutely agree with the minister, and that is why we need to make sure we do everything we possibly can to find out why this is happening. That is why we need a parliamentary select committee into the effectiveness of the Queensland government's mine safety regime. The inquiry needs to be public and we need to hear from every stakeholder, particularly industry, miners themselves and of course their communities in regional Queensland. We need to hear from people who live in Blackwater, Tieri, Capella, Clermont and Emerald. Those towns need to be involved in this solution. This will allow anybody involved in the industry—especially those in regional areas who are at the coalface of the industry—to participate, to give evidence and to help us find solutions to make sure we have the safest mining industry in the world. All the Labor Party has done is announce two closed shop reviews which will report by the end of the year and be tabled in parliament. We need to have a public inquiry so everybody can be involved.

What has been disappointing is reports of budget cuts to mine safety and the fact that the important mine safety advisory committees were dissolved by the Labor government due to not meeting gender representation quotas. Seriously? The mine safety advisory committees have not met because of a gender balance issue. That was the hold-up. That is what has held them up. You have got to be kidding. This is a multimillion dollar industry employing 50,000 workers, and gender balance has stalled the important safety committee from meeting.

We need a full bipartisan parliamentary inquiry into mine safety and we need it now. The reduction in investigations proves that we need an open and independent inquiry into mine safety because Labor has clearly dropped the ball. This is an industry that contributes billions of dollars to the Queensland government's coffers. If these reductions are due to cost cutting, we need to get to the bottom of it and do the right thing by the hardworking men and women in our resources industries. Serious questions also need to be asked as to why so many mine safety roles have remained vacant under the Labor government. The state's chief inspector recently resigned, showing that it is clear all is not well in Queensland's mine safety regulator.

Mine safety is far too important to get wrong, and something is clearly going wrong in Queensland. Rural and regional mining communities deserve better. We need to find out what is going on. This industry is far too important to let this go. We are not stopping the minister doing what he is doing now. He can continue to do what he is doing now, but he can also hold a parliamentary inquiry which will allow mineworkers—the people at the coalface—to have their say. They can come up with some evidence and even help us with some solutions, because there is nothing better than actually getting it from the people who work in the industry and who do not have the exposure of coming down to Brisbane or being in a closed shop review. This needs to be a public review so we can see those submissions. That is why we need a parliamentary inquiry to get to the bottom of it. It was the same with the black lung issue. We need to make sure mine safety becomes our priority and we get it right once and for all.