




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019

MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.29 pm): I rise to support the private member's motion introduced into this House by the shadow minister for natural resources, the member for Burdekin, Dale Last. This motion directs the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee to inquire into and report on the effectiveness of the mine safety regime in Queensland. It is of great importance that the committee conducts this inquiry to ensure the openness and transparency of the information gathered.

The LNP have called for a bipartisan parliamentary inquiry with regional hearings to allow this issue to be discussed in the local communities it directly affects. On the other hand, the Labor government has announced two internal, closed shop reviews and reports into mine safety. These reviews are to be conducted behind closed doors without the valuable information from those working at the coalface of the industry. An inquiry conducted by the committee would allow submissions from the general public, mining industry representatives, interest groups, miners and, importantly, families who have been affected by the recent deaths and injuries of mineworkers.

It is a sad fact that there have been six deaths in Queensland mines and quarries in the last 12 months. That is six families who have lost a loved one whilst in the workplace, surely an environment from which one would ordinarily expect a person to return after their shift had ended. One would think safety would be paramount in an industry with numerous hazards associated with it. One would think that checking on that safety would be second to none to ensure the workers in this environment are always protected. Unfortunately, that is not the case. There were 500 fewer mine safety inspections completed in 2018-19 than in 2015-16. This statistic did not appear to have affected the advisory committee on mining safety, which did not meet for several months last year because the board did not have the correct gender requirements.

The Labor government is continuing to follow their anti-resources, anti-regions and anti-jobs agenda by not allowing a public inquiry. We need to hear from all stakeholders, especially miners, industry members and local communities. It is about time this government provided them with some answers. What is happening in our mines and what has been the cause of so many fatalities in the past 12 months?

The mining industry contributes billions of dollars to the Queensland economy which ultimately ends up in the state's coffers. The resource sector is worth \$62.9 billion to the state economy and directly employs over 54,000 people. The resources industry is doing their fair share of the heavy lifting for the Premier and the Minister for Natural Resources. This makes a drastic reduction in the number of mining safety inspections even more difficult to fathom.

Supposedly the Labor Party's core principle is to support workers' rights. This is a massive fail by this government; they cannot ensure protection of workers at their place of work. Mine safety is too important to get wrong. People's lives are at risk. Rural and regional communities deserve much better from this government. The LNP is committed to holding the government to account when it comes to our miners' health and wellbeing.

The member for Keppel made a comment about supporting miners in her electorate. I would inform the member for Keppel that I have a mine in the electorate of Condamine. That mine is New Hope's Acland mine. At the moment these people are more worried about job security. That mine has a long and proud safety record. The management of New Hope's Acland mine are in the difficult position of having to terminate over 150 employees in the very near future. The minister talked about getting this report and acting swiftly. The workers at Acland have been waiting for this minister to act for five years. That does not fill us with confidence that the government will act swiftly.

The minister also made a comment about the committee. I and the other non-government members of the committee—the member for Bundaberg and the member for Burdekin—are ready to start tomorrow. If the minister wants to start this inquiry, we are ready to go; we are ready to start. I implore him to display some openness and transparency around this inquiry.