




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (5.45 pm): The Palaszczuk government is investing in safety for Queensland's mine and quarry workers. The opposition's claim of budget cuts is just blatant fearmongering. Let me be clear: there were no budget cuts to mining safety and health under this government. In fact, the government committed to three new inspector positions and an additional chief inspector.

Our government has taken action for workers and their families. We are investing more in resourcing for our Mines Inspectorate. Some \$1.68 million has been set aside in the budget for more mine inspectors. Our government will appoint three new mine inspectors as well as two additional chief inspectors—one for coal and one for mineral mines and quarries. This will take the Mines Inspectorate numbers in total to 48—the highest number in a decade. I am advised that presently the recruitment process is underway for a mineral mines and quarry inspector to further service the local industry in Townsville.

It cannot be argued that the Mines Inspectorate does not do critical work. In 2018-19, in response to concerns over methane gas management in underground coalmines, the Mines Inspectorate undertook an extensive audit of gas management and released its report to industry. I know that the Queensland mining industry need not be reminded of human tragedy that can occur if gas mining is ineffective. On 16 July, it was the 33rd anniversary of the Moura No. 4 disaster, which took the lives of 12 coalminers. There is a critical need for focus on gas management. Otherwise the outcome could be catastrophic. This year we also saw an underground mine fire at North Goonyella to which the Mines Inspectorate has dedicated significant focus and manpower—first towards overcoming and then assessing re-entry into the mine.

Those opposite referred to the decreased number of inspectors. I refer to the independent Commissioner for Mine Health and Safety, who noted in her 2017-18 report that inspectors now place more emphasis on mine audits. Mine audits are a more in-depth analysis of a mine operation's safety and health system and provide more valuable feedback to mine operators regarding improvements. An inspection may take two or three days. An audit is a more in-depth analysis and takes a team of inspectors a week.

We heard the passionate speech from the member for Burdekin. He said that he is standing shoulder to shoulder with the miners. The member for Burdekin did not turn up to the safety forum, so he certainly was not standing shoulder to shoulder with those miners, nor standing shoulder to shoulder this week with those at the Mine Health and Safety Conference. There is no sincerity from the shadow minister for mines and natural resources in talking about standing shoulder to shoulder with miners when he disappears.

Clearly, the former LNP member for Whitsunday led the charge with opposition rhetoric regarding the hardworking Mines Inspectorate. They have joined in when asking to relocate the inspectors to a single location. This displays a fundamental misunderstanding on the opposition's behalf. Inspectors

are located close to the sites they regulate in order to effectively and efficiently conduct announced and unannounced inspections, audits, investigations and education workshops and forums. This means that currently 18 of the 22 coalmining inspectors are located in Central Queensland offices, in Mackay and Rockhampton, providing close access to the Bowen Basin, which is rich with coal. Similarly, more than half of the mineral mines and quarries inspectors are located in Mount Isa or in my community of Townsville, in which are located many mineral mines and quarries.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit Phosphate Hill Mine, Cannington mine, Ernest Henry mine and Dugald River mine. I saw firsthand that safety was priority Nos 1, 2 and 3. I also heard of an unwavering commitment to the safety reset. Members of my community fly in and fly out to each of these mines. The people I represent who work in these mines and quarries deserve to come home safe. The Palaszczuk government is investing in resourcing our Mines Inspectorate to ensure they do exactly that.