




Speech By
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MOTION

Mine Safety, Parliamentary Inquiry

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.39 pm): First and foremost, I express my deepest sympathies to the families who have lost loved ones on mine sites and quarries in Queensland. What we have seen over the last 12 months with these six deaths cannot be taken lightly in this place. Can any of us imagine what would happen if our families faced the tragic news that we died in an accident while here? Can members imagine what sort of inquiry would ensue?

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. If members are having conversations, please take them outside. There is too much general noise in the chamber.

Mr WATTS: What would the Clerk do if someone here were tragically killed when they came to work? Would a quiet little inquiry be held behind closed doors or would it be a very public, open and transparent inquiry looking into the circumstances and processes that led to the tragic circumstances?

First and foremost, let us look at what the industry contributes. The industry contributes \$62.9 billion to the Queensland economy and 54,000 direct jobs. Every single person in those direct jobs deserves to get home to their family. We should do everything we can to ensure that happens. For some reason the minister thinks that if we have this inquiry then other things being done cannot be done. We support the other things being done Minister. We support everything that is being done to protect the lives of people who work in mine sites and quarries. That is not a reason for not having an open, public, transparent inquiry.

I do not understand why the Labor government is afraid of an open and transparent inquiry. If there is nothing to hide, there is nothing to hide. If there are systemic failures in the system, they should be highlighted. As we saw in the black lung inquiry conducted by this parliament, there was a systemic failure. I refer to the fact that there were 10 fewer inspections a week than occurred a number of years ago. We should ask why they are happening less often. I do not know why they are happening less often. The minister may well know the answer, but an inquiry would make it clear so that everybody in Queensland knows the reason why. They then would understand if it is due to a budget cut or some other reason. If there is a good, valid reason, why hide it in a report that nobody can see? Why not have an open, public, transparent inquiry so that people from towns all around Queensland can speak to their elected representatives? That is the point of this place and why parliament has the powers to conduct these kinds of inquiries.

It is a great opportunity for us to ensure that Queensland leads the world in mine and quarry safety. We should be the world leaders. We are a great economy. We depend on this kind of industry and we should have the best safety practices, processes and procedures in the world. What we should not do is if we cannot find the right people to sit on a board—that is not a reason for the board to not meet. We heard earlier that they met in September and then some six months later. In that six months, tragedies that should not have occurred did occur. We should ensure that our processes are world

leading—that we are the best in the world when it comes to safety in this area. The best way to do that is with an open and transparent inquiry to look at the systems and any systemic failures that may have led to these tragic circumstances.

If there were an open, public inquiry, we all could see if we are world leading in safety. If we are not world leading in safety, we will have a good idea how to clear it up. I do not understand why the Labor government is afraid of an inquiry that will lead to better practices and to us being a world-leading nation in terms of safety in mines. I do not understand why open and transparent government is something that those on the other side fear. This is an opportunity for us to take our place as the safest place in the world to mine. We should grasp it with both hands.