




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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RESOURCES SAFETY AND HEALTH QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (12.56 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2019. At the outset, like my colleagues, I note that the LNP will not be opposing this legislation because we place the safety of the more than 54,000 Queensland mining and resources workers as our highest priority.

This bill is the government's response to some of the recommendations of the Project Management Office, which was established to develop a path to implement the key recommendations of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee. Some of these recommendations related to the structure of the regulator and sought to ensure that the resources safety and health regulatory functions were separate from the government's industry facilitation functions. To achieve this, the bill proposes the establishment of the Resources Safety and Health Queensland, or RSHQ, as a statutory body independent of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.

As a member of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee tasked with reviewing this bill, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my fellow committee members—the members for Bancroft, Condamine, Bundaberg, Ipswich West and Mount Ommaney. I would also like to thank the committee secretariat who are always professional and diligent in supporting the work of the committee. I would particularly like to thank management and staff from New Hope's Jeebropilly coalmine for facilitating the committee's visit on site and for their frank feedback in relation to the efficacy of current mine health, safety and compliance actions.

I found the site visit to Jeebropilly informative, particularly as we had the opportunity to speak with mineworkers and management to hear their views. I echo the sentiments expressed by the member for Bundamba during the committee hearings about the need for better engagement with mineworkers across the state, not just in the south-east corner. I believe it would have been beneficial for the committee to hear from workers in places like Central and North-West Queensland, as I know their issues and concerns are as diverse as those expressed by the miners we did have the chance to speak to.

This bill follows the tragic death of eight young men in Queensland mines and quarries over the last 18 months, so it seems self-evident that Queensland's resources health and safety system is not currently working. The committee received a diverse number of submissions from a number of industry groups and unions. The majority of submissions were broadly supportive of the proposed changes. However, reservations were expressed in relation to some aspects of the bill. I would like to touch on one of those issues raised in my contribution today.

The Queensland Resources Council raised the issue of the independence of the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health. I note that the minister addressed the role of the commissioner in his contribution today. However, I believe the issue of the independence of the commissioner has not been adequately addressed. In particular, the fact is that the commissioner does not have a separate staff and is reliant on RSHQ for staffing to fulfil their role. Such a structure compromises the commissioner's

independence, and one could foresee a situation where the actions or inactions of RSHQ are of interest to the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health but he or she would require the support of RSHQ to provide additional resources just to enable the commissioner to conduct inquiries.

The LNP shares the concerns of many Queenslanders in relation to mine safety. That is why we fully support the establishment of a parliamentary select committee into the effectiveness of the Queensland government's mine safety regime.