




Speech By
Jim Madden

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

Record of Proceedings, 4 February 2020

RESOURCES SAFETY AND HEALTH QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (12.47 pm): As a member of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee I rise to speak in support of the Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2019. The objective of the bill is to establish a revised regulatory framework for resource safety and health in Queensland that engenders workers' trust, ensures appropriate independence and transparency and enhances independent oversight of the performance of the regulator. Minister Lynham said in his introductory speech delivered on 4 September 2019—

The re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis and the six mining and quarrying fatalities that have occurred in the last year highlight the need for continuous monitoring and improvement of the regulatory framework ... As the minister responsible for resources safety and health, I am committed to maintaining the most effective regulatory framework possible to ensure every worker in Queensland's resources industries goes home safe every day.

The bill establishes Resources Safety and Health Queensland, otherwise known as RSHQ, as a statutory body ensuring genuine independence of the regulator—which was at the core of the select committee's recommendations and the government's response. The bill has arisen from the recommendations of the independently led Project Management Office, the PMO, which was established by the Queensland government to examine and develop for implementation key recommendations of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee, otherwise known as the CWP Select Committee.

The CWP Select Committee was established by the 55th Queensland parliament on 15 September 2016 to conduct an inquiry into the reidentification of CWP in Queensland. The CWP Select Committee report No. 2, *Black lung white lies: inquiry into the re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland*, made 68 recommendations, some of which concerned the structure of the regulator. The Queensland government has supported in principle all 68 recommendations.

After the tabling of the bill, it was referred to the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee, and the committee tabled its report in October 2019. The committee recommended, firstly, that the bill be passed. Secondly, the committee recommended that the chief executive officer of the Resources Safety and Health Queensland have appropriate resource industry qualifications and experience. Thirdly, the committee recommended that the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy or the Resources Safety and Health Queensland, if established, provide a briefing to the committee in mid-2020 on the finalised funding model for the Resources Safety and Health Queensland. Finally, the committee recommended that the annual report of the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health Queensland be published on the Resources Safety and Health Queensland and the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy websites.

On 3 August 2019, I was pleased to attend the Southern Region Rescue Challenge, hosted by the New Hope Group's Jeebropilly coalmine at Amberley. I was a proud uncle watching my nephew Nathan Thompson, a fitter at the mine, participate in the challenge. His sister, my niece, Cara Thompson, works at the South Walker Creek mine in Central Queensland—so safety in mines is very important to me personally and is very important to my family.

The Jeebropilly Mine opened in 1982. Although it was considered a small mine, the mine went on to produce 32 million tonnes of coal product in its 37-year history. It was my sad duty to once again attend the Jeebropilly Mine on 18 December representing the state government for the official closure of the mine. The mine's general manager, Trent Knack, stood before the dignitaries and employees past and present to thank those who made the mine, which he described as 'not just a coalmine'. As he said—

You see Jeebropilly isn't a location, it's not a place, it's not even in a mine—Jeebropilly is its people. The real value of a mine like Jeebropilly isn't measured in dollars, it's measured in spirit, a spirit that has flowed into our communities through our local workforce since 1981.

Such is the importance of the mining industry in Queensland many miners at the Jeebropilly Mine are third-generation miners. In Nathan Thompson's case, his grandfather worked at coalmines in the Marburg area, making him a fourth-generation miner. The closure of the Jeebropilly Mine saw the closure of the last large-scale mine in the Ipswich area. Coal was first discovered in Ipswich at Kholo in 1825, and the first coalmine was established at Redbank in 1843 by the Petrie family, whose company built the House that I make this speech in.

Since 1843 mining has provided employment and put bread on the table for the families of thousands of Ipswich men and women. Many learnt the mining trade in Ipswich and then moved on to other mines in the state. So I was saddened to hear that an Ipswich miner was killed in a mining accident at Curragh mine at Blackwater on 12 January 2020—just three weeks ago. Donald Rabbitt was killed in a rock fall during mining operations. The death marked the eighth death at Queensland mines and quarries in the past 20 months and follows a 'safety reset' for the mining industry last year that was triggered after the mining death toll hit six.

Prior to Mr Rabbitt's death another Ipswich man, Brad Duxbury, died on 25 November at the Carborough Downs mine site at Coppabella, 120 kilometres south-west of Mackay. Prior to that in July, 27-year-old Jack Gerdes died at the Baralaba North coalmine in Central Queensland after being caught between an excavator and safety stairs. I would like to extend my sincere sympathies to the families and colleagues of Mr Rabbitt, Mr Duxbury and Mr Gerdes, as well as the other five miners killed in mining accidents over the last 20 months.

I agree with the comments made by Queensland's CFMMEU Mining and Energy Division President, Steve Smyth, who said the death was a continuation of the recent 'carnage' in the mining industry and that this situation cannot continue. That is why I support the Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2019, as it will establish an independent resources and health safety authority, which is a key to avoiding accidents in our mining industry, particularly fatal accidents.

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow members of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee, chaired by the state member for Murrumba, Chris Whiting; the committee secretariat led by Jacqui Dewar; the submitters; the relevant government departments who assisted the committee; and Hansard. I commend the bill to the House.