




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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**MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (5.21 pm): That is a deeply disappointing piece of histrionics and theatre that does not address the issues. What we have heard today through all of their theatre is that they are against every single aspect of the bill. They wish to pick holes in every single aspect of the bill. That makes us think that when they return to government they will pull it all apart again. Let us not forget that, for all the histrionics, the legislation under which those events happened is the LNP's legislation. They brought in that legislation.

My Cornish ancestors, the Casleys, came from the extreme tip of Cornwall where the tin mines extend far under the Irish Sea. They dug those mines over generations with picks and shovels, shoring them up and using their knowledge of the terrain to keep them and their mates safe. They were the first community to come out to Australia and set up underground mining, which has been such a big part of our economy and such a big part of Australia's history. They faced enormous economic pressure to go down into dangerous mines, as well as indifference from often remote owners for whom the loss of life in underground mines was part of the process.

As the need for skilled miners increased in Australia as surface gold was wiped up, they brought their skills and bravery here and they formed the bedrock of mining in Australia. They also fought to see safety and security of work improved—often through our trade unions. They would have insisted that mineworkers deserved equivalent protections that all other workers in Queensland already have under the Palaszczuk government. That is why I am proud to be part of the government that has been continuing to reform mine safety and health over the past five years.

I am also proud to be a part of a government that backs our mining sector. The Palaszczuk government has a strong record of supporting and advancing the resources sector. Since taking office, we have supported more than \$20 billion worth of investment in resource projects, resulting in 7,000 jobs in the mining and gas sectors. We have worked effectively to ensure the continuity of the resources sector under the threat of coronavirus. I particularly recognise the minister who is passionate about keeping workers safe from the coronavirus and to keep them working because they are the big part of our economy. We know that the LNP federally had members who were willing to rip this apart and shut down the industry.

Looking forward, we are well placed to continue that growth. There have been over 230 exploration permits in minerals, petroleum and coal granted in the current financial year to date. That is a great vote of confidence in the administration of mines in this state.

We recognise that mining can be very dangerous, but it need not be. I note the Australian Workers' Union submission, which states—

In the past twenty months, eight workers have tragically lost their lives while at work on mines and quarries in Queensland.

We know it can be dangerous, but we reject these accidents and deaths as inevitable. We do not accept them. We will make mining safer in Queensland. That is why it is important that this bill includes industrial manslaughter as a provision, sending a clear signal that ignoring safety in our mines and causing death is a criminal offence. The aim of this is to profoundly change the organisational culture of mining to ensure safety in our mining workplaces.

I note that, although those opposite will not vote against it, they constantly pick at this issue and have given a clear indication that if they were in government they would tear it up. What are they suggesting? Are they suggesting that it would be okay to give the green light to criminal negligence leading to the death of a worker? Isn't that implied in what they are suggesting—that we are not to send a clear signal that workplace negligence should be treated as a criminal offence?

Every worker who enters a mine site deserves to go home to their family. Every worker deserves to work in a workplace that is focused on workers' safety, not as an afterthought, not as a price of doing business but as the primary goal—one that they must meet before the first tonne of ore or coal is removed from the mine. I have long held concerns about the nature and employment in our mines. It should be that the owner of the mine, wherever possible, directly employs all of the workers at that mine. It is possible that labour hire could be used in temporary circumstances or for particular temporary skills. I think safety is enhanced when the operator is directly employing mineworkers.

This bill is an important step that requires that persons appointed to critical safety statutory roles for mining operations must be employees of the operator. This ensures that those who take on these roles have greater security of employment and can more confidently speak up and fulfil their role at the mine with less fear of losing their employment than if they had a more tenuous employment arrangement. These statutory office holder positions are required to be appointed under legislation to a mines management structure already within its operation.

I hope that the industrial manslaughter provisions will be discussed very seriously amongst senior mine officers and will make the safety of our workers the primary goal of their operation. Without this, the operation of a mine should not go forward. It is serious that senior officers up to executives could face up to 20 years in jail if Queensland mineworkers die because of criminal negligence. Fines can also apply, with maximum penalties up to \$13 million.

We know that the LNP did nothing about mineworker safety and health during their disastrous three years in government. They let a culture of safety begin to slide. This legislation stops that and sends a clear signal. We remember how they joined up with One Nation to oppose industrial manslaughter laws for non-resource workplaces nearly three years ago. Now it looks like they are going to do it again. Let us remember that they are saying to Queenslanders: that where there is criminal negligence in industrial circumstances there should not be a law that holds that person criminally responsible.

We have heard that Queensland miners and their fellow workers were deterred from raising safety issues out of fear that they may lose their jobs. We know that miners' job security and safety on the job are linked. However, we also know that the LNP—and they have proved it here tonight—are hell-bent on reducing the job security of mineworkers and, as a result, reducing the safety of workers. I warn them that the consequence of this is a reduction in safety and inevitably more injuries and deaths in mines.

Everyone in this House should reject any measure that makes a miner so uncertain of their continuing employment that they do not stand up and say no when they know what they or their work mates are doing is unsafe. Reporting and job security are linked, and if we increase reporting we must increase job security.

Each day my Cornish ancestors, the Casleys, went down into the tin and gold mines in fear, knowing that serious injury and death could be the result. I want no worker today to face those same fears. They would be proud that their great-great-grandson stood up today for miners' safety and job security.