




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

Record of Proceedings, 11 August 2020

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

BIODISCOVERY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (3.55 pm): The protection of our environment is a core value of mine and a core value of this government. Best practice mine site rehabilitation is an important environmental reform in Queensland given our history, and I support both the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 and the Biodiscovery and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to upholding the highest environmental standards while also providing for jobs and growth. The Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 will allow for an effective system to rehabilitate resource sites, in turn creating more economic certainty and fertile land for our recovering Queensland economy. The Palaszczuk government has always been committed to achieving the best environmental standards while creating more economic certainty. We did that in 2018 with the passing of significant reforms to mine rehabilitation laws. These reforms included the requirement to prepare a progressive rehabilitation and closure plan that incorporated time based rehabilitation milestones. This plan ensures that rehabilitation occurs progressively over the life of the mine.

The establishment of the rehabilitation commissioner has been a thoroughly considered policy decision of the Palaszczuk government. The commissioner is the best way to support the implementation of these world-leading laws and to provide more certainty on best practice rehabilitation. The Palaszczuk government has done this in a collaborative way, working with the environmental and resources industry to ensure the new rehabilitation regulations continue to encourage investment in the industry and the creation of local jobs. To inform investment decisions for rehabilitation activities, industry requires certainty about the rehabilitation outcomes that will be required at surrender and any residual risks costs. This bill is a further step in ensuring that our regulations support growth and jobs for Queenslanders across our state while also delivering the highest of environmental standards.

There are specific economic benefits in the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 which will provide for more certainty as we move through these tumultuous economic times. The rehabilitation commissioner will be tasked with publicly publishing reports on best practice management and rehabilitation of land online. This will create much needed clarity and more transparent expectations of the resources industry regarding obligations around rehabilitation and land management. This increased clarity in best practice management and land rehabilitation will boost community confidence in our resources industry.

Appropriate rehabilitation will result in more land in our regional areas being returned for productive use after mining is completed. This will mean more land for agriculture and even recreation. A high standard of rehabilitation not only protects our environment but also indirectly creates jobs in regional Queensland. The residual risk reforms will provide more clarity to the existing residual risks framework.

The bill will prescribe clearer requirements in the framework when it comes to the process of surrender to environmental authorities. This will be done through the introduction of the post-surrender management report, which ensures that the necessary information required at the time of surrender is consistent and is compiled in one report, simplifying the current process. The reforms to the residual risk framework directly address industry claims and concerns that the current requirements of the framework are confusing and prevent resource companies from applying for surrender.

The bill will also support the resources industry by providing for increased flexibility around the timing for submitting a progressive rehabilitation and closure plan. The bill directly responds to industry requests allowing progressive rehabilitation and closure plans to be submitted after an environmental impact statement has been completed. This will allow the progressive rehabilitation and closure plan to be responsive to the information collected in the EIS process. The creation of a new decision-making point will allow stakeholders to determine whether an EIS will be required for their project before undertaking an environmental authority application.

This bill reflects the Palaszczuk government's continued collaboration with industry to ensure a smooth transition to this new framework. We have been committed to ensuring Queensland has the most advanced rehabilitation laws in the world. The resources industry has also expressed support for the amendments that will result in projects benefitting from greater certainty before starting the application process to environmental authorities. The bill will deliver a range of benefits to industry without imposing any additional regulatory burden. Across the board, Queenslanders and our environment will benefit from the increased clarity and certainty regarding rehabilitation requirements for industry and the Queensland community. I commend the bill to the House.