




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (11.46 am): It is a privilege to rise to voice my support for this bill. In particular, today I rise to speak about the first objective of the bill, which is all about safety. We have had many tragedies in Queensland. I am reminded that we are here now in this chamber while four men are still in hospital after suffering significant burns in a mine incident in Moranbah only a fortnight ago.

Just a few months ago I visited the miners' memorial at Moranbah. Mining is in Queensland's blood, but in Moranbah it is in their DNA. The memorial commemorates 13 miners who lost their lives while working in the surrounding coalfields. It also remembers those who lost their lives on the roads, in work camps and on their way to and from work. Reading the names on the plaque brought home to me the significance of the one step we still need to take to ensure that legislation keeps up with what society expects. While visiting the memorial, I ran into Peak Downs mineworker Scott Leggett, who told me just how proud the town is of their beautiful and moving memorial and how we still have so much to do to keep miners safe. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Scott's contribution to the parliamentary committee that considered this bill. His working life is dedicated to supporting mineworkers.

I know how the incident two weeks ago would have shaken the Moranbah community. I take this opportunity to extend my well wishes to the men's families and friends, and to the amazing frontline health workers who supported them and saved their lives. This is now our opportunity to put the lives and safety of our miners first.

The first objective of the bill is about continuing to raise and strengthen the safety culture in the resources sector. We all deserve to work in a safe workplace and we all deserve to come home safe after a day's work. Before I was elected as the member for Waterford, I worked as an employment lawyer representing the very miners and workers we in this chamber are now working to protect. I believe wholeheartedly in and have devoted much of my professional working life to ensuring that the welfare and wellbeing of workers is front and centre. We are one step away from making that a reality for our miners and quarry workers and today we are taking that step.

In 2017 the Palaszczuk government passed laws to ensure that industrial manslaughter became a serious offence—one that carries very significant penalties. These vital reforms ensure that not only do the families of those lost in tragic but avoidable circumstances get the justice that they deserve. They ensure that companies are compelled to put safety as the highest priority, as it always should be. Queensland already has the toughest mine safety and health laws in the world, but this bill affords the 50,000 mine and quarry workers the same enhanced protections that every other Queensland worker is protected by.

The bill also implements legislative changes to support the Palaszczuk government's ongoing reforms to mine rehabilitation and financial assurance laws. It progresses amendments that align with the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to improve the regulatory efficiency of the resources

sector. Significantly, the reforms in this bill will form part of a suite of sweeping mine safety and health reforms that include: better detection and prevention of black lung with an improved safety net for affected workers; statewide safety reset sessions for mine and quarry workers to refocus on health and safety; \$35 million to deliver reforms to improve the safety and health of our mineworkers; extra mine inspectors; and the establishment of an independent resources health and safety authority.

It must be important to say at this point that the bill is not about prosecuting mine companies that provide the jobs to so many; they are measures to reasonably enforce safety obligations. If our companies do the right thing and put health and safety first, then there is nothing to fear from this legislation.

One of the first cases I worked on as a young employment lawyer was with a local Moura resident named Johnny Hempseed, who was a long-time coal shop steward for the AMWU and had been, for many years, fighting for a miners memorial in Moura to honour and remember their miners. The memorial in Moura, the one in Moranbah and the others that exist in so many mining towns is why this bill is before us. Having visited so many, I hope for a day when no memorial and no plaques are added, mourning a lost miner, the one who went to work and never came back. Today we take the next step in ensuring that we put Queensland miners' lives first. I commend the bill to the House.