




Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (12.11 pm): I rise to speak on the Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. First, I would like to acknowledge why this bill is before us. I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the eight miners who have passed and my thoughts are with the five who are now in critical care.

I have lived in Central Queensland mining towns including Moranbah. I have worked at just about every single pit in Central Queensland from Goonyella to Moura. I know what the miners are thinking because they tell me straight up and from the heart. They are sick of this government that is trying to lay blame wherever it can. You cannot argue with the independent Auditor-General. He said that only 20 of the black lung report recommendations have been fully implemented out of 66 recommendations. Worse, from this report it seems 27 have not been implemented and the recommendations not accepted.

Firstly, I support the introduction of industrial manslaughter, as it will only affect those within our industry who are not doing the right thing. With that being said, I am against the changes to the statutory office holder roles. I am not sure that this change is practical or sustainable on the basis that, if a permanent statutory employee takes leave for a couple of months—which is a high probability given the age demographic and employees having long periods of service and large amounts of accumulated leave entitlements—the coalmine operator will have to employ another individual to cover this temporary gap. This may sound easy, but I assure members that it will not be.

Also, a large percentage of the people who work in these contract roles are working for themselves, not for large labour hire firms. They have started companies and work for themselves. Under these proposed changes, they will not be able to continue doing that, and as such I fear that a lot of them, who have no will or desire to be a direct employee of the mining companies ever again, will retire and we will lose hundreds of years of experience along with them. This is important.

The minister has stated that the overwhelming message from his safety resets across the industry was that labour hire are scared to speak up and that this is the reason for the change. That statement may be correct, but it was from the masses in the workforce—the machine operators and the tradesmen—not the statutory officials. What is being done for the labour hire employees as a whole? Absolutely nothing is being done. The member for Bancroft was here the other day saying that Labor supports the middle class and the working class. If we were going to make these roles permanent, why didn't we do it for all workers? Why didn't we do it? Where were they?

**Dr Lynham:** It's a federal government responsibility.

**Mr ANDREW:** Make a recommendation to them, if that is the case.

**Dr Lynham:** We tried.

**Mr ANDREW:** I take that interjection. If we wanted to make real change around the statutory roles, we would have legislated against them performing a dual supervisor/statutory role, as this can in certain instances be in conflict with each other. Also, we should have looked at raising the required

competencies for supervision, as this is currently a massive issue right across the industry. We only need to look at the morale of the people out there. What we should have had is buddy system where the people who have experience are paired up with the younger people who do not have experience. That is how I learnt in the industry. It is a simple thing to do, and we should be doing it.

I also believe there are massive issues with our regulatory body—the Mines Inspectorate. I know of many occasions where complaints have been made and no action has been taken, not even a site visit to look at the issue. At the end of the day, if the industrial manslaughter laws are passed, persons in the statutory roles will be right in the firing line for these laws to be applied if they are failing in their obligations. If the looming threat of 20 years imprisonment is not enough to compel them to perform their role correctly then I can assure members that whoever they are employed by will do nothing.

Coalminers and their families are being treated with contempt. This government is not serious about mine safety. They are only interested in mine royalties—yes, the money, the dollars, the dosh. To this government, the coalminers are the bank tellers. They mine the coal, they produce the royalties and the government then spits in their face by spending it on Cross River Rail and on all of these other projects in the south-east corner. The miners do not get the royalties. All they get is cheap words of supposed care and sympathy as they lie nearly dead in a critical condition in a Brisbane hospital. Words cost nothing but safety costs money. We are seeing crocodile tears. They do not care, because as each miner is transferred to hospital they are replaced just as quickly. Saying sorry is too little too late.

The real reason this government has wimped out on implementing the recommendations in mining reports is that it does not have the intestinal fortitude to do it. That is the truth. This government is weak—so weak that a full-strength XXXX would knock it over. Oh, sorry, I forgot—this mob would only drink expensive beers or champagne! This government is not the workers' or the coalminers' friends. It has betrayed them time and time again.

The public servants in the Mines Inspectorate and the department do not want to move to Mackay—a key recommendation of the black lung report. They want to stay living in suburbs like Kenmore, Toowong, Clayfield and other green, leafy suburbs of Brisbane as far away from the coalmines, coalminers, coal towns and coal dust as they can get. They live a champagne lifestyle with their families with little fear of having accidents or being killed, whilst the blood of the miners is wiped off the coalface. They live off the miners but they will not live with them. That is truth. Where is Moranbah? Tell me.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! The member will direct his comments through the chair.

**Mr ANDREW:** The regulators should be in Mackay and Moranbah. This government will be forever shamed including the members for Mackay, Rockhampton and Keppel. We should all stick together on this and back our people.

**Mrs Gilbert:** You've got no idea.

**Mr ANDREW:** I will take that interjection. How many go out to the coalface? How many have I seen in the 30 years that I have been out there?

**Ms Lauga** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There will be no quarrelling across the chamber.

**Mr ANDREW:** Roll on October so they—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Pause the clock. You will direct your comments through the chair. There will be no quarrelling across the chamber.

**Mr ANDREW:** Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. Roll on October so we can tell this incompetent, blame-diverting and shameful government that we are not going to cop it anymore. We are miners and we are proud of it—and we deserve to be safe. That is what they are saying, and that is what I am saying here today. When it comes to the government's insincere platitudes, sneaky talkfests and no action, they can keep them. I do not support the bill.