




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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COAL MINING SAFETY AND HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (6.13 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Coal Mining Safety and Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This bill strengthens the safety and health culture in the resources sector through the facilitation of permanent employment conditions for coalmining statutory positions. Secondly, this progresses amendments to enable the implementation of a key action in the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan as well as make amendments to resources acts to address an operational issue and correct clerical errors.

I am going to speak to the safety component of the bill. As members would be aware, back in May 2020, the Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 amended the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999 to require a person to be an employee of a coalmine operator to be appointed to a safety-critical statutory role. Everyone in Rockhampton knows a miner. They are our sons and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends and they deserve to come home safely to our community at the end of each day.

The health and safety of our 75,000 resource workers is paramount to the Palaszczuk government. I have had my constituents who are contractors at the mines come to speak to me directly about their fear of reporting health and safety issues. They are concerned about the culture of their workplaces and that if they raise issues what the consequences could be. They tell me they just do not get any more shifts and end up unemployed and without severance pay. How difficult would it be for contract statutory officers to report safety concerns when they are in fear of not getting further shifts and fear for their employment as a whole?

Our government's previous bill on this legislation required statutory officials for mining companies to be employees of the company and they have had 2½ years to implement that. This was to ensure that a staff member can raise safety issues and make reports about dangerous conditions without fear of losing their job, as well as give the industry time to make adjustments to their workforces. The direct employment requirements come into full effect on 25 November 2022 when this 2½-year transition period ends. Representatives from the coalmining industry raised concerns in implementing the direct employment requirements. Industry stated that the requirements would have the potential to impact their ability to consistently supply coal and, as a result, would affect their financial viability and the sustainability of their businesses.

There was a tripartite working group established representing industry, workers and the regulator to find solutions to the identified issues. As a result of this process, this bill will amend the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act to address these implementation issues. The amendments will allow limited exceptions to the direct employment requirements while still achieving their intent. As I have said previously, we need to ensure that we have practices in place to reduce the risk to our mine employees and have strong processes in place to ensure safety issues are identified and reported to ensure our family and friends can return home safely at the end of each day.

Further, I understand that this bill is delivering key actions from the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan which the Minister for Resources launched earlier this year. Everyone in regional Queensland knows how important critical minerals are in the global push for decarbonisation so it is great to see these key actions which will allow the Minister for Resources to defer the first year's rent for specific critical minerals mining leases already before the House. The amendments will allow the Minister for Resources to defer rent for a mineral that is prescribed in the Mineral Resources Regulation 2013 and in circumstances where the proponent can prove that the funds saved from the deferral will be utilised towards startup costs for the project. I commend the bill to the House.