




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 30 August 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Mining Industry, Deaths

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.36 pm): I quote—

I can see a time when the fact that a person has been seriously injured or killed will be regarded as purely the trigger for an investigation designed to prove that the management systems failed and therefore the mine officials or some other poor soul must be prosecuted or clearly made to pay the price.

Those are the words of Mr John Brady, a well-respected Queensland mining industry identity, which were read on his behalf by his son, Michael, on 1 March 2001 at the Warden's Court of Queensland. Sadly, many in our mining industry would agree that the time John Brady referred to has arrived.

Last November I attended the Moranbah Miners' Memorial annual service, just as I have done since the first event in 2019. It is a moving ceremony and an event that the president of the committee, Scott Leggett, and his team should be immensely proud of. During Scott's speech, he said—

We don't want this to be a work in progress, we want it to be completed, and the only way to truly say we have achieved this is when we don't add another name to the sandstone blocks before us.

Scott went on to ask that people of influence contribute to making the miners' memorial a finished project and, as the member for Burdekin, the electorate that is home to the lion's share of Queensland's coalmines, today I make my contribution.

Legislation passed through this House in 2020 created a new body of investigation and cleared the way for people to be, in the words of John Brady, 'made to pay the price'. While no-one would say that a person who is directly responsible for injury or death should not be held to account, we must again remember the words Michael Brady spoke on his father's behalf—

In our zeal to attach blame or to demonstrate that someone has been made to pay we tend to forget the families, the rescuers, first aiders, workmates, friends, supervisors and managers all of which are victims to varying degrees in an event that should not have occurred.

The response to the outcomes of the inquiry into the incident at the Grosvenor Mine on 6 May 2020 calls into question the effectiveness of that new body established that very same year. Many have said we have not learnt from history, but it is history itself which may offer the solution.

Today I will be writing to the chair of the Transport and Resources Committee requesting that that committee consider conducting an inquiry into the reintroduction of the warden's inquiry system, and my reasons for that request are simple. We must ensure impartial investigations of incidents that result in the death or serious injury of coalmine workers. Instead of directives with powers enshrined in legislation, the current system gives non-binding recommendations and we have a system where a public interest test leads to delay and inaction.

This government has overlooked the fact that the Coal Mining Board of Inquiry requested action from the former minister for natural resources to ensure witnesses would be compelled to give evidence, a request included in the board of inquiry's report tabled in this House on 14 June 2021. Because a

warden's inquiry is effectively a court and can, therefore, compel witnesses to answer questions under oath, that issue is addressed. As a court, the outcome of a warden's inquiry and its recommendations are made public, providing transparency and, due to the involvement of reviewers or panellists with industry expertise, the recommendations are enforceable and are sensible recommendations to prevent similar incidents from occurring.

When introducing the legislation that abolished the warden's inquiry, former Labor member for Mount Isa, Hon. Tony McGrady, said the legislation would provide 'a clear role for government'. As elected members, we all have a role to play and a contribution we can make to keeping miners safe. This is an opportunity to identify deficiencies in current legislation, an opportunity to prioritise the health and safety of our mineworkers and, more importantly, an opportunity to show our support to the resource sector. It is for that reason that people like Scott Leggett, Dr Ray Parkin and John Brady should be acknowledged for their efforts in bringing this to the fore and for their continued fight to ensure that the health and safety of all our workers in the resource sector are paramount.