




Speech By
James Martin

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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**COAL MINING SAFETY AND HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (5.53 pm): I start by acknowledging the commitment of the member for Callide to workplace health and safety and his experience at the Grosvenor mine. However, I would ask that he considers his own side's position when it comes to the right of unions to enter workplaces to stand up for the safety of workers. I know that under the previous LNP government union officials who wanted to stand up for the safety of their workers were not allowed to attend site. When they did turn up to site they were forced to sit in a room where they could be viewed very closely by management. I would ask that the member considers that. I am not sure if those opposite have done a complete 180 on union right-of-entry rules. Certainly the laws that were introduced by the LNP around right of entry reduced the safety of all Queensland workers. I would add that you are supporting an amendment for a 12-month extension that delays the enactment of safety legislation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order! Member for Stretton, please direct all comments through the chair.

Mr MARTIN: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. The bill deals with two main issues. Firstly, it looks at further strengthening health and safety in the resources sector. Secondly, it looks at supporting Queensland's resources sector and the good full-time jobs that it creates by making it easier and faster for small and medium-sized mining companies to get their mines up and running and allowing them to defer some initial costs and reinvest that money in the startup. I will start by talking about the second aspect first because the bill delivers a key action of the Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan that the Minister for Resources launched earlier this year.

The Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan presents this government's 30-year vision for our resources sector as a resilient, responsible and sustainable industry that grows as it transforms. The Queensland resources industry has underpinned the state's economic development and prosperity for more than a century. Our metals, minerals, coal and gas industries have helped to define our state and are part of Queensland's identity at home and abroad.

Every Queenslanders benefits from our resources industry. Mining supports around 77,000 jobs, mainly in regional Queensland, and royalties from mining companies help to pay for services such as schools, hospitals and roads throughout the state. The Palaszczuk government want these benefits to continue and I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Resources in developing the industry development plan, along with industry, in order to achieve this. It is good public policy that supports Queensland's future by supporting jobs and our economy, providing and funding the good quality services that we all love and, importantly, protecting our fantastic Queensland lifestyle.

However, the world is changing. Global economies are rapidly decarbonising their energy industries and investments, and they increasingly need minerals and metals to develop low-emissions technologies. Queensland's resources industry must also respond to a number of other emerging trends such as growing investor and customer expectations regarding the industry's environmental, social and governance performances, and also the disruption caused by automation.

The challenge of automation is something that the members of the Transport and Resources Committee and I have seen firsthand. Recently we went underground at the Grosvenor mine. It was an amazing experience to see the technology that is being deployed in the industry. We saw the long wall, which is very impressive technology. It is a little daunting to be down there knowing that the roof above you is collapsing as the machinery moves along. What occurs underground is a real feat of engineering.

More and more of the operations can now be done remotely from the surface and we also visited the remote operating centre on the surface at Grosvenor. I have to add that being underground in that confined space, many metres below ground, has reaffirmed my respect for workers who do that for a living. When you are down there it becomes very clear that if something goes wrong then there is the potential for loss of life or serious injury. That is why we must ensure that we do everything we can to have good effective health and safety legislation that protects the safety of the workers, which is what this bill does.

The trends that the industry is facing create great challenges but also present even greater opportunities for transformation. For example, Queensland is well placed to provide the new economy minerals that the world will need to meet global emissions reduction targets. Developed together with industry and communities across our state, the industry plan is our shared response to those challenges and opportunities. The goal is that by 2050 Queensland's resources industry will be recognised globally as a leader in mining that delivers for Queenslanders not just in economic royalties and good jobs but also environmentally and socially, as a global supplier of new economy minerals and as a creator of high-quality and high-wage jobs and careers.

The plan outlines the global challenges and the challenges facing the resources industry, opportunities for industry growth, diversification and the collaboration and commitment required by government and industry in order to achieve this vision. The plan outlines a mix of incentives and initiatives to transform the state's resources sector. A key focus, one that really highlights the importance of diversification in mining here in Queensland, is on critical minerals.

The plan was launched only a few months ago. I am pleased that action 10 from that plan, the rent deferral for critical minerals projects, is included in the bill. Action 10 is all about developing and implementing a framework to allow the Minister for Resources to approve the deferral of the first year's rent for critical minerals mining leases that meet certain criteria. Importantly, it must be in circumstances where the proponent can prove that funds saved from the deferral will be utilised towards the startup costs of the project. This will support miners to redirect funds towards their project during a time that is critical to cash flow and improve their chances of success, which means jobs and, importantly, royalties for Queensland. I know that small and medium-sized companies often face difficulties in getting their mines off the ground in the early years. By being able to access this rent deferral at this crucial juncture, operators will be better placed to start producing and generating capital sooner.

I turn to the health and safety aspects of the bill. I share with members that on the committee's trip to Moranbah we did stop to visit the miners memorial in the town square which commemorates the miners who went to work in the Moranbah coalmines and never came home, their mates whose lights were extinguished in the rock and dust, and all those workers who lost their lives on our roads, in our work camps and from coal related diseases. Every tragic death brings a close-knit community to its knees. This memorial showed the support and gratitude that this community had for families and loved ones left behind and the respect for miners past and present.

For me, the memorial was another reminder of the importance of workplace health and safety legislation. I acknowledge that this legislation has been fought for and won by unions and enacted by Labor governments. At the core of every real trade union is the safety of its members. That is why I am happy to support this bill, which improves health and safety by implementing direct employment requirements for coalmining statutory positions. This comes into effect on 25 November 2022. Importantly, these requirements were first legislated on 25 May 2020. The industry has been in a transitional period since then, with plenty of consultation and feedback given by all parties. During this period, the parties—mine operators, unions, the department and mining inspectors—have been discussing the implementation of these safety improvements.

The committee also heard from industry, unions and the department. I thank those who made submissions. There has certainly been an extensive consultation period in which all parties have made their preferred positions clear; however, it is important to note that on some issues it was clear that agreement between the parties could not be reached. It is good that the minister has taken a prudent approach, providing some compromise. There was clearly no way through for the parties themselves. That is the reason the amendment put forward by those opposite will not work. We have already had two years of consultation. Another 12 months will not do anything to bring the parties together. It was a situation where the minister was faced with two parties diametrically opposed and he had to provide

security for the mining industry and make a decision. That is exactly what a good minister would do in that situation. I commend the minister on that decision. Finally, I thank all members of the committee and the secretariat for their work on this bill. I think everyone has worked collaboratively and efficiently. I commend the bill to the House.