



Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**


**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT**

**Box Flat Mine Disaster**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.15 pm): Just a few weeks ago on the weekend of 30 and 31 July, the Ipswich community came together to mark the 50th anniversary of the Box Flat Mine disaster and to mourn and commemorate the 18 men who lost their lives in that tragic event. The 50th anniversary was made possible through the hard work of the Ipswich Historical Society and its president Hugh Taylor and his wife, Margaret. I want to thank them all today for their efforts. They organised a series of special events in the last weekend of July to mark this solemn milestone in our local history which included the unveiling of a display at the Queensland mines and rescue centre, a formal dinner on Saturday night, and a moving commemorative service at the Box Flat Memorial in Swanbank on Sunday morning.

I want to thank the Minister for Resources, Scott Stewart, for coming to two of those events. I know that it meant a lot to our community. Each event solemnly reflected on the tragedy that happened in the early hours of the morning of 31 July 1972 while Ipswich was sleeping. Many older Ipswich people remember the disaster to this day. Such was the intensity of the explosion, some Ipswich people remember their homes shaking from the blast. It was the worst mining disaster in Ipswich's history. The Ipswich community back then was still quite small and close-knit, so many local people knew of someone who had died or was injured. Family members of the mine workers killed in the disaster still bear the scars of losing their loved ones. Seventeen Ipswich men lost their lives that day, including eight members of the Booval Mines Rescue Brigade. Another man lost his life from his injuries 19 months later. A further 14 mine workers were injured from the blast.

Coalmining has played a significant role in Ipswich's foundation and history. It is part of our identity and it was integral to our local community for almost two centuries. At one point in the early 20th century Ipswich produced 80 per cent of the state's coal. Even into the 1980s Ipswich produced two million tonnes of coal. Over 1,000 people worked in the Ipswich mines at its peak, and thousands more relied on the local coalmining industry for their income. Working conditions in the underground coalmines were tough and sometimes dangerous, but generations of men in Ipswich were proud to call themselves coalminers. These men were tough, courageous, and shared a special camaraderie which was essential to working in that formidable environment. The miners and rescue workers who went down into the Box Flat Mine that day to try to extinguish the underground fire all exhibited those personal qualities.

I am hugely grateful to the Ipswich Historical Society for their commitment to honouring those brave men. Their dedication to preserving the memory of the Box Flat Mine disaster means that we will continue to honour and remember those men for many years to come.