




Speech By
Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (6.25 pm): I rise to contribute to this bill. I will begin by pointing out the disingenuousness and hypocrisy of the Queensland Greens pretending to be a friend of Queensland coal workers. On my reading of the bill, nowhere in this legislation is there an ability to contract out statutory positions. On the contrary, it acknowledges that the only people who can fill the roles are those employed by the mine operator itself.

An utmost priority of our government is Queenslanders being safe in their workplace. Every worker deserves to go home to their loved ones at the end of their shift. The most important thing to come off a mine site is its workers, and the Palaszczuk government will always put the health and safety of Queenslanders first. It is critical that Queenslanders can be confident the resources industry is doing everything it possibly can to ensure the health and safety of the workers it employs.

This bill strengthens the health and safety culture in the resources sector through the facilitation of direct employment requirements, which require a person to be an employee of the coalmine operator to be appointed to certain statutory positions. These requirements ensure holders of statutory roles at coalmines can make safety complaints, raise safety issues or give help to an official in relation to a safety issue without fear of reprisal. Previous speakers have spoken of the deleterious culture of fear that exists for workers who raise issues connected with safety.

The bill provides practical ways of implementing the direct employment requirements that do not unreasonably disrupt employment arrangements while upholding the intent of the original legislation. It will ensure the coalmine operator, the entity ultimately responsible for the coalmine and the safety of its workers, remains the central point of responsibility. There will be no blame-shifting under the reforms in this bill. It will also ensure that responsibility for safety is not fragmented across multiple employers, with their own structures, systems and cultures.

It is the Palaszczuk government's expectation that those who undertake coalmining operations must have as their ultimate priority the health and safety of coalmine workers who are exposed to the hazards of operations in coalmines. These amendments are the result of extensive consultation over approximately one year by Resources Safety & Health Queensland, the committee that considered this bill and the broader government. Industry did advocate for these amendments, and the government has listened to those representations and responded.

As many know, my local community of Ipswich is the birthplace of Queensland's coal industry. Coal was first found in the area we now know as Kholo in 1825, and Queensland's first recorded coalmine opened at Redbank in the Bundamba electorate near the junction of Six Mile Creek in 1843. In the following years more mines were established in areas including: Goodna, Collingwood Park, Dinmore, Swanbank, New Chum, Blackstone—again all in the Bundamba electorate—and a little bit further afield in Wood End, Tivoli, Denmark Hill and Rosewood. Tragically, more coal and more jobs also came with more risk. Records show that 186 men and boys lost their lives in the Ipswich mining industry between 1858 and 1997. This is the highest number of fatalities of all Queensland coalfields.

We can never, ever stop striving for higher safety in the resources industry, and we can never accept anything other than a zero-harm approach when it comes to workplace health and safety in the resources industry. I commend the bill to the House.