




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mining Industry

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.09 am): I need to advise that this morning my ministerial statement comes with a dad-joke warning. Queensland has a long history of small-scale mining, particularly in Central and Western Queensland, and the mining communities are real gems. Small-scale mining activities benefit communities throughout the state and help support great regional jobs. In Queensland we have a storied history of mining high-quality opals, sapphires and other gemstones. In the earth around towns such as Quilpie and Winton you can find boulder opals, which are unique to Queensland and, in my opinion, are a cut above the rest.

Today I can advise the House that the government is taking action to back genuine small-scale miners and the communities they operate in as they continue to contribute to Queensland's great lifestyle. The existing moratorium on new mining claims will end as scheduled on 24 November. I can assure small-scale miners that mining claims will remain in the state's mining laws. Additionally, my department is seeking input on a range of proposals. Those proposals aim to back genuine miners as well as deliver for regional tourism and other stakeholders with an interest in small-scale mining, including landholders, local communities and local businesses.

The 12-month moratorium has served its purpose. It allowed government to talk to communities, landholders and small-scale miners about the best way forward. I take this opportunity to acknowledge particularly the valuable contribution throughout this process of Mayor Kerry Hayes from the Central Highlands Regional Council.

The proposed changes that are now on the table seek to achieve two clear goals: to ensure that our framework is effective and efficient. What we want to address for local communities issues such as claimholders building permanent structures and living on claims rather than mining them. We also want to address issues for the taxpayers of Queensland as a whole including claimholders abandoning their sites and leaving the clean-up to government and, ultimately, the taxpayer. We have also put on the table some options for new fossicking areas for everyone who has a fossicking licence to enjoy. I highly recommend that families looking for regional adventure this summer holidays try fossicking. You never know what you might find and I am sure the kids will dig it.

The proposed changes are outlined in a discussion paper that is now available online at the government's Get Involved consultation website. I encourage the holders of Queensland's 2,000 or so mining claims and community members in those areas to have their say by 24 February when consultation closes.