




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 31 March 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Coalmining, Incidents

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (2.43 pm): Before I begin, I would like to offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the friends and family of the miner who passed away after suffering head injuries in a lifting accident at Anglo's Moranbah coalmine on Friday night. The latest death follows that of another Anglo American employee at Queensland's Crinum underground coking coalmine last September. Both tragedies show clearly that, despite all of the fine words and promises this government has made over the past three years, absolutely nothing has changed in Queensland when it comes to protecting the lives and the wellbeing of our coalminers—something that only really hit home, as far as I am concerned, when I heard recently that the Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor had announced that no prosecutions would be made in relation to the truly horrific accident that occurred on 6 May 2020 at the Central Queensland Grosvenor mine.

I have heard from countless miners that this news was like a sucker punch, with many saying it marked the lowest point of oversight for the safety of coalminers since the Coal Mines Inspectorate nearly 100 years ago. What happened at Grosvenor on that day in 2020 to five young contract coalminers has left an indelible mark on the mining community in my region. I have friends who are still plagued by what they saw as they worked in amongst that.

The horrific burns the men received after having to rescue themselves and each other off the mine face were shocking. They were all put into induced comas for weeks afterwards and have suffered through multiple ongoing operations. They have been left with permanent physical scarring and mental trauma as a result of their ordeal. To now find that there would be no prosecutions is shameful. Some of the miners have told me they knew the cover-up had been launched as soon as they saw the terms of reference for the inquiry. The terms stipulated that only evidence covering the period between 1 July 2019 and 5 May 2020 would be presented and considered. This means the actual day the event took place was specifically excluded from the inquiry. Why? The decision makes no sense at all, other than it was part of some backroom deal made between the government and the management in order to shield each other from their shared culpability that day. That is what the mining community is saying, at any rate, and who could argue with them? Secrecy and evasiveness were evident at every stage of this inquiry from what I have been told.

Imagine a criminal trial where no evidence was allowed to be presented from the events of the day that the crime was committed or from those who were there. The five workers who were horrendously burnt that day in 2020 have been given a life sentence of pain, permanent injury and irreparable disfigurement. In the words of one experienced miner who wrote to me this week—

It seems to me that it is only the coal miner at the coal face that is trying to do anything to help his fellow workers, but where does he go and what can he do when the supreme decision makers have abandoned them?

So who is looking after us?

(Time expired)