




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.36 pm): I would like to make a short contribution on what was obviously an important inquiry. The coal industry is the lifeblood of Queensland, along with agriculture. I pay tribute to every coalminer. They all do a fantastic job. I have been underground quite a few times. I have been down to what they call the shaver, which is right at the bottom where they cut the coal and then transport it back up to ground level. I can say that those coalminers earn every dollar that they get. People talk about how coalminers get a lot of money and are on this or that. I can tell members that, with the hours that they work—often 12 hours a day for seven days in a fortnight—they deserve every dollar they get. They do a fantastic job.

We have been looking at this issue for quite some time and not only for this report; since my time in parliament, we have done a couple of inquiries into coalmine safety. We have to get it right. It is an important industry, but the lives of the coalminers are paramount and their communities are small. In my area, when you hear of an accident at a coalmine your heart sinks because you might know the people involved. I can give an example of how close-knit the community is. We went to Grosvenor Mine where the general manager is a bloke I played footy with. We played junior Rugby League with the Emerald Tigers. I have known Paul all my life. He was a coalminer and has risen through the ranks all the way to a management position. He is committed to the industry. I pay tribute to Paul. He is a really good bloke. They are doing a wonderful job there.

Of course, the tragedy at that mine was incredibly significant and it broke many hearts. People were very worried about the miners who were affected. I can only hope that they are recovering in the best way they can and can live the best lives they can. Hopefully, they will get back into the industry.

This issue has not happened overnight. Coalmining safety has been an issue for a very long time. I remember back to 1994 when I was a young ABC rural reporter and the Moura tragedy happened. To learn what happened to the men who lost their lives in Moura broke everybody's hearts. We have to get mine safety right.

I take the point made by the member for Burdekin: people want to be able to do their job and arrive home safely, but they also want to know that if they do report something then it will be taken notice of. This is about information. It is about ensuring that the next shift to come on will know what is going on. It is about knowing that if there is a safety issue at that mine then everybody is aware of it. We have to make sure that everyone knows that.

It is such an important industry. We have such great wealth from our coalmining industry. It paves the way for a lot of royalties that come to this government and pays for a lot of things. If we are taking these royalties, can we please start spending some of these royalties where they came from?

Ms Boyd: That is exactly what they do!

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. I have been waiting for the Blackwater Hospital for over five years now. Blackwater is a town of 6,000 people, but it caters for 12,000 people. The hospital has been promised for a very long time, yet nothing has been done to get the Blackwater Hospital going. We need that very urgently.

Returning to mine safety, I note non-government members' concerns. Obviously, we have to increase the resources of Resources Safety & Health Queensland, RSHQ. That needs to be funded so it can operate to the best of its ability. It needs the authority to make sure everything is safe. All I ask is that we fund these bodies to make sure they have the resources to protect our miners.

Finally, I again pay tribute to every coalminer in Queensland. They pay a high price in terms of their time. They are away from their families for a long time. They sometimes work in extreme circumstances, going down to the shaver. If anybody has not done that, they should. If they do, they will understand how hard that work is. I commend this report to the House.