



Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.17 pm): I rise to speak to the committee report titled *Inquiry into coal mining industry safety*. Mining has always been a high-risk industry and history shows that far too many miners have had their lives cut short working in this industry, particularly coalmining. Only a few weeks ago I attended the 38th annual miners memorial service held at Mount Isa to remember fallen miners. It was, as always, a very touching service and at the conclusion an honour roll of miners who have lost their lives was played which brings home the scale of some of those disasters and how many miners have lost their lives over the years, none more so than the Mount Mulligan disaster where a coaldust explosion resulted in the death of 75 miners on 19 September 1921—one of the worst mining disasters in our history.

While safety processes have improved a lot since those days, we still see too many coalmine incidents and must continue to remain vigilant for areas where practices can be improved. It is the government's job to drive that process and support industry with the right regulation and mechanisms to implement changes. That is what this government should be focused on. The Palaszczuk government is reaping an enormous windfall in coal royalties, yet in the committee report recommendation 6 suggests a fee increase to increase resourcing for Resources Safety & Health Queensland for compliance and enforcement. Whilst I support a properly funded Resources Safety & Health Queensland, I believe the government should return some of these coal royalties to the industry that has provided it with so much revenue and increase the funding through that source.

It is also important to note that the Palaszczuk government was reaping in record coal royalties even prior to the increase in the royalty rate this financial year. Why has that money not been better used to resource RSHQ? Recommendation 6 as written only specifically mentions compliance and enforcement programs. This wording implies that regulation and legislation are currently adequate to address safety concerns. The results would say otherwise. It omits the need for RSHQ to be proactive in working with industry to improve safety procedures and culture by sharing learnings from the incidents and near misses or new technologies and practices that may be applicable today. That is what should be happening. It is something this side of the House wants to see.

The report referenced the Brady review, a review which identified that a large number of fatalities involved inadequate training of workers and that controls meant to prevent harm were ineffective, unenforced or absent, with no or inadequate supervision. These are serious findings. The review found that almost all of these fatalities were the result of systemic organisational and supervision-of-training failures and that human error alone would not have caused all of these fatalities. Again, that is a very serious finding.

The report also recommends an increase in unannounced inspections. We were all shocked by the explosion at Grosvenor Mine, where five miners suffered serious burns and were lucky to escape with their lives. I am visiting Grosvenor next week. I made a promise that I would go down when that

mine was operating again, and I am doing that next week. This event led to the Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry. This inquiry was concerned to understand how the Queensland coalmining industry has responded to the findings and recommendations of the board of inquiry. Many of these recommendations remain to be implemented.

There have been a number of legislative changes that are having an impact on the number of statutory officers coming through the system. The Board of Examiners' annual report shows a significant decrease in the number of statutory officers. These mines cannot operate without experienced, qualified SSEs and OCEs in these positions. The LNP wants to achieve zero harm in the coalmining industry. We believe that this is a goal that should be strived for, as every person deserves to return home at the end of their shift. I urge the government to put actions ahead of words and ensure this can be the case. Positive and constructive action on safety will always be supported by the LNP. A strong and safe resources industry is in the best interests of all Queenslanders.