




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 24 August 2023

CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING AND OFFENDER PROHIBITION ORDER) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (12.50 pm): This is a sad day for Queensland politics. This is an abuse of parliamentary privilege on a grand scale. The Northern Territory and Queensland are the only Australian parliaments that do not have an upper house to scrutinise legislation. The only opportunity that we have in Queensland to properly scrutinise legislation is via our committee system. All legislation should go through the committee system so that it can be properly scrutinised, to identify unintended consequences. There may be urgent circumstances that require a piece of legislation to be rushed through, but that is not the case here. I was not due to speak on this bill. I thought we had enough former police officers and people with legal backgrounds who could speak to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Little did I know that the bill would contain amendments to the Mineral Resources Act 1989.

We knew that there was an issue at Glenden. We have heard that. The member for Burdekin, Dale Last, has been talking to me about this. He has been talking to the people of Glenden and to the resource holders out there about this situation. There are some complex aspects. These provisions should have gone to a committee so they could be properly investigated. When the Minister for Resources, Scott Stewart, stood in this House yesterday and introduced legislation, I thought perhaps—because the Premier had announced that there would be legislation brought into the House to deal with the Glenden situation—Minister Stewart would put those amendments in that bill and it would go to the Transport and Resources Committee to be investigated and then brought back to the House, but no: amendments will be made to the child protection bill. Why on earth did the Minister for Resources stand in the House yesterday and not speak to this piece of legislation?

Members would think there is something outstandingly urgent about this. In 2014, the Coordinator-General began this process around Glenden—not two days ago, not tomorrow and not next week—and outlined conditions. Section 6.2.1, 'Housing and accommodation' states—

The proponent has developed a Workforce Accommodation Strategy and all temporary and permanent housing will be provided by QCoal. The construction workforce will initially be accommodated in a village style accommodation providing up to 350 rooms to also be used for operational workforce as required.

It goes onto say—

The residential accommodation for operational workers will be built on acquired surplus Department of Education land—

this is in Glenden—

which has received development approval. It will consist of duplexes for singles or couples and houses for families.

It goes on to state—

I note the proponent's intention to maximise the number of operational workers and their families living in Glenden by developing a Glenden Urban Design Master Plan ...

Further on it says—

I have imposed Condition 2 in Appendix 1 that requires the proponent to provide an annual report to the Coordinator-General for five years from the commencement of construction. The report must describe actions, outcomes and adaptable management strategies to avoid, manage or mitigate project-related impacts on the housing market in Glenden. The report should also describe actions and management strategies addressing direct impacts arising from operational activities undertaken during the five-year reporting period.

Where is that? There is a long list of failures by this government that has brought us to this moment whereby we are amending the terms of the mining lease while considering a child protection bill. There is nothing in these amendments that is urgent. The amendments state—

- (4) The mining lease is subject to the following conditions—
- (a) the holder must accommodate at least the following number of workers in Glenden—
- (i) for the period starting on 31 March 2025 and ending on 30 March 2026—10% of the workers at any time;
 - (ii) for the period starting on 31 March 2026 and ending on 30 March 2027—25% of the workers at any time;
 - (iii) for the period starting on 31 March 2027 and ending on 30 March 2028—50% of the workers at any time;
 - (iv) for the period starting on 31 March 2028 and ending on 30 March 2029—75% of the workers ...

Where is the urgency? Why has this had to be rushed through? The minister could have put this in the bill he introduced yesterday. Yesterday the minister said in his brief statement on this amendment that there had been consultation. I can tell you: the phone calls I received last night and today are not telling me that.

There are serious questions about who actually owns the buildings. What consultation has there been with QCoal and Glencore? When this bill passes, who will be responsible for the maintenance of facilities, including the shops and the pool? We know that there are a lot of asbestos issues in those houses. Who will remove the asbestos and who will do the repairs?

This is not an isolated incident, because Glencore itself elected to expand its Hail Creek workers camp by 1,000 workers rather than accommodate its workers in the vacant houses it currently owns in Glenden which require extensive renovation, including asbestos removal, to bring them up to high standards. Glencore's Hail Creek camp is approximately the same distance from Glenden as the Byerwen mine. Glencore's expansion of its Hail Creek camp was facilitated by the same ministerial approval that Glencore was seeking, so why is there one rule for one and not for the other?

So many regional towns are totally dependent on mining, so when this was raised we took it as a serious issue. We knew that there had to be a way to support our towns while supporting the workforce. There was obviously an issue of ownership. This needed full, open investigation. What is being done today through the House reeks of a cover-up. There is something that is not apparent; there is a reason we are doing this. Why has this suddenly had to be rushed in? Why is there no transparency around the process? It makes no sense. This story will not finish today. Of that I am quite confident. The flow-on effects to other mines, workers camps, mining towns and communities are very real. I hope that it does not impact on towns like Blackwater, Moranbah and Dysart.

I asked the minister at estimates about this issue and he said that he was in conversations. He gave no indication whatsoever that something like this was about to happen. The relationship between this government and the resources industry I did not think could get worse. They have had unexpected shock after shock. This government has dealt blow after blow to the resources industry. This is just another one that has come out of the clear, blue sky with no consultation or consideration of the knock-on effects. This is one of the most important industries that we have in this state—this state is totally reliant on it—and it has been treated with disdain.

This also impacts workers. The workers have no say in this. What do the workers think? Are they happy to live in Glenden? Are they happy to be bussed back and forth? There is nothing in these amendments about that and the minister did not talk about it yesterday. There are a lot of questions to be answered on this issue but, unfortunately, we will not hear them in this debate. It will remain a mystery. As I said, I am very fearful of the unintended consequences of this decision.