




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.13 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Transport and Resources Committee Report No. 29, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into coal mining industry safety*, tabled on 16 February 2023.

A 2019 study found the Queensland mining industry has the third highest work related fatality by industry rate. The 2020 Grosvenor Mine serious accident which saw five workers catastrophically injured in a gas explosion near Moranbah resulted in the Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry. The board of inquiry made numerous recommendations aimed at improving coalmine safety. However, workers continued to be killed at coalmines. Since the board of inquiry three men have lost their lives due to accidents in Queensland mines. Their deaths were utterly preventable.

Prior to entering parliament I worked as an electrician on mine sites. I am aware that mines are dangerous places, but I also understand that safety management systems that are effectively designed, implemented, followed and audited can minimise incidents and injuries. Mining companies make large profits from their Queensland coalmine operations. However, productivity should never come before the safety of their workers. As the minister says, the most important thing to come out of a mine at the end of the day is its workers and they should all be able to go to work knowing that they will return home safely at the end of their shift.

During our inquiry the committee observed a theme that has permeated multiple government inquiries into safety in the mining sector. Mining companies speak loudly about how committed to safety they are, but individual workers feel there is a fear of speaking up for safety and a risk of reprisal for doing this. During our inquiry we had the opportunity to visit the Grosvenor Mine and see for ourselves the conditions in which underground coalminers work, and I thank Anglo American for hosting us in November 2022 during that visit. It was amazing. Having worked in an open-cut mine, just to see the conditions in which they work in an underground mine is a real eye-opener and my commendation to everyone who goes underground. It is not a good environment to work in and they all need to be safe.

Our committee made 11 recommendations largely around enhancing tripartite consultation and consensus between the companies, workers, their representatives and safety authorities. We also recommended that there be more unannounced inspections and that any safety related bonuses be based on lead rather than lag indicators to stop financial gain potentially hindering genuine safety reporting. I am pleased that the minister has acknowledged our recommendations and hope the Resources Council of Queensland can work with other bodies to help address the ongoing perceptions and issues to help make our mines safer.

There was some confusion about a 1800SAFE number that the Resources Council brought up which no-one seemed to really know about, and that is the problem. These mines all need to be on the same page and the same safety standards need to be throughout the whole industry. It is disappointing

to me personally that the same concerns about safety versus production are still perceived to be part of an industry over 18 years after I left the industry. In saying that, there have been some marked improvements, and commendations to the companies for that.

We held public hearings in both Moranbah and Brisbane and I want to thank those witnesses for their time and their helpful insights. Finally, I also want to thank the individuals and organisations that made written submissions to the committee. As always, I thank our Transport and Resources Committee and the secretariat for all of the hard work they did. I commend the report to the House.