



Speech By
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TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.51 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the report titled *Inquiry into coal mining industry safety*. Nobody in this House should underestimate how important the coalmining industry is to Queensland. When you need a hospital bed, when you need an ambulance, when you drop your kids off at school or when you drive down the road, the royalties and income generated from this resource extraction in Queensland is fundamentally underpinning many of our electorates, and it always has. That should never get in the way of a miner being able to go to work and arrive home safety. We may be able to benefit from the sweat of their work, but we should not benefit from their blood or the tears of their families in giving Queenslanders the things we want to make our society better. We had a board of inquiry and there were many recommendations. Others have spoken about those. I would encourage the government and the minister to make sure that all of those recommendations are followed as quickly as possible, whether there are regulatory, legislative or financial resources required.

We have heard about the RSHQ. Some would say this is an industry where workers are paid well. Having gone underground at Grosvenor—and I thank Anglo American for that—I would say this is a pretty tough environment. It is a very unfriendly environment for a human to work in. We must make sure that RSHQ has the resources and the people at RSHQ are paid appropriately so they choose to do their job well. They should make sure we fund that better, because at the end of the day we need to change the entire—not change; that is not fair—we need to support the culture, being one of safety across the industry, across the regulator, across the ministry, across the owners of the mines, across everybody involved in the industry from start to finish. We have heard about lead and lag indicators and we have heard about recommendations, and there are recommendations from this committee report as well. I want to encourage those people who want extra things in their electorates to understand where that money comes from and to go and read these recommendations and support them being implemented. We need a culture of safety across the entire industry and everybody who participates in it.

It is intimidating. I have been to open-cut mines. When you see those massive pieces of equipment you can understand how things go wrong, but let me tell you that going underground is an intimidating experience. As you drive down you realise that if something goes wrong your chances of survival are very limited. You are going into an environment where there is gas, where there is a chance of collapse, where there is the chance of an explosion and where there is heavy machinery operating. We went along and looked at the shaver, but it was non-operational. It was intimidating because, as you are standing on the boardwalk just behind where it shaves the coal, behind you is collapsing 500 or 600 metres of earth as the coal is being extracted and you are completely dependent on this piece of equipment. At Anglo it was great to see that they are looking at the remote control of some of that

equipment. They are trying to remove human interaction from some of the machinery, but at the end of the day this is a tough job. Some say that the people who do this job earn a lot of money, but in my opinion they earn every cent of it; there is no doubt about that.

As the Queensland parliament and as the executive, the government in charge, we owe it to them to make sure we are a world leader in both technological solutions to keep them safe and cultural practices that we all support and adopt throughout the state to make sure everybody is approaching this from the point of safety. With that, I would say read the board of inquiry's recommendations and let's get on with it. Look at the committee's recommendations. Let's get them implemented and let's make sure everybody gets home safely.

(Time expired)