



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee, Report

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (9.36 pm): I rise to speak to the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee's report into the 2024-25 Appropriation Bill. In the wake of tragic incidents and several inquiries, this government made a range of commitments to improve safety in the resources sector. Those commitments were made to workers, to their families and loved ones, and to communities throughout Queensland, including my electorate of Burdekin. In response to those commitments, workers in the resource sector stepped up. As requested, they have increased reporting of high-potential incidents, HPis, and they have made anonymous complaints aimed at improving safety, and more than 1,500 workers are voluntarily participating in continuing professional development.

While workers are honouring their commitment, I also sought confirmation that this government is honouring its commitment and responsibilities. While the acting CEO of Resources Safety & Health Queensland confirmed to the committee that both RSHQ and the Board of Examiners have sufficient resources to deal with the increased workload that has come from those incidents and inquiries, concerns around some recommendations were highlighted during the course of the hearings. For example, we learned that a key plank of Dr Sean Brady's review of fatalities is still not fully implemented more than 4½ years after Dr Brady's report was provided to government.

Of concern to all coalmine workers and their families will be the fact that the number of safety inspections of coalmines reduced by over 18 per cent in the last two years. I tabled evidence during the hearing that shows the inspector had been raising concerns about an increase in the frequency of unplanned movement of mobile plant for two years. The documents refer to a total of 33 unplanned movements, 24 of which involved rear dump or articulated trucks and one that involved a truck sliding almost 180 metres.

A total of 96 suspension notices were issued to mines and quarries during 2023-24. That is an alarming number. These suspensions happened in response to a serious incident, according to the minister, who went on to say that he fully supported swift action when it comes to safety. I will leave it to the people who work in Queensland's mines to decide if two years meets their definition of swift action, but it definitely does not fit mine.

In addition to holding this government to account when it comes to mine safety, we also sought information on behalf of residents of Happy Valley on K'gari, on behalf of landholders with regard to vegetation mapping, and on behalf of all Queenslanders with regard to the remediation of tailings storage facilities.

What is of great concern to me and other members on this side of the House is the difference between the government's version of consultation and what is expected by Queenslanders who are directly affected by the decisions this government makes. The Burdekin electorate is home to the lion's share of Queensland's coalmines. As the member for Burdekin, let alone the shadow minister, the importance of mine safety is raised with me almost every day. It is a topic that is important to all Queenslanders because of the role the industry plays in our economy and mostly because Queenslanders want Queenslanders to be safe at work.

The estimates hearing reinforced that there is still a considerable amount of work to do when it comes to making our mines as safe as possible. It is concerning that this government has chosen to effectively ignore recommendations that came out of a range of inquiries. It is deeply concerning that for too long this government ignored the advocacy of people with a lifelong interest in the industry.

Although the minister notes the effect changes have on landholders and the importance of communication, we received no assurance that landholders were directly informed of changes to their obligations under vegetation management laws. While there is a reference to consulting with peak stakeholder groups, landholders are left to check whether they are affected. It definitely seems that the responsibility lies with the property owner. The number of calls I am receiving from landholders confirms there is widespread mistrust and confusion across the state when it comes to vegetation management mapping and changes to PMAVs.

The resource sector is the engine room of this state. It provides a massive economic benefit, not to mention tens of thousands of jobs. The royalties paid by mining companies are worth billions of dollars. I will continue my fight to see our fair share of those resources reinvested in the areas where this wealth is generated. For too long our rural and regional communities have missed out on their fair share of the pie. I will continue to fight on their behalf to see the reinvestment that is needed in these rural and regional communities right across Queensland.