




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 12 September 2024

PROGRESSIVE COAL ROYALTIES PROTECTION (KEEP THEM IN THE BANK) BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (11.45 am): 'I discovered there is a big difference between what the Labor Party preach and what they do when they get into power.' Those are the words of the former Labor candidate for Everton and former ministerial staffer David Greene, as reported in the *Courier-Mail* yesterday. You could be forgiven for thinking that Mr Greene was referring to this bill, the Progressive Coal Royalties Protection (Keep Them in the Bank) Bill 2024.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Mineral Resources Act 1989 to introduce a coal royalty rate floor, ensuring regulations cannot prescribe coal royalty rates lower than those periodically prescribed. In effect, the Treasurer's bill is about removing that ability; it is about removing an option that his own government has used.

Why would a government do that? The answer is simple: to facilitate a political stunt and a fake scare campaign by a desperate Treasurer. Already we are hearing that scare campaign being rolled out by those opposite during this debate. As we saw yesterday, this government treats this parliament as its plaything, as nothing more than a rubber stamp. This bill is nothing more than another illustration of the arrogance of this government. During this year's budget, we heard the Treasurer ask Queenslanders to forget about the past, and it is crystal clear that this government has either conveniently forgotten its own past or is trying to pick and choose what is recorded.

The explanatory notes state that this Treasurer's actions to introduce progressive royalties in 2022 were the first change in 10 years. Tell that to the resource companies who, in 2019, were told to cough up \$70 million or face royalty increases. The then treasurer—how could we forget—Jackie Trad, denied to the *Courier-Mail* that she was forcing companies to comply but said—

... if there is an agreement from the mining companies ... we will make an agreement to freeze royalties for three years.

Who could forget the Treasurer saying that industry was consulted, only for the Premier to tell the *Courier-Mail*'s Future Resources event that Treasury did not consult with the industry to ensure they could control the timing? So much for a government that promised transparency! The Treasurer may have been unsure of the industry's stance on progressive royalties, but there simply can be no question about our stance. As the *Record of Proceedings* shows, we supported the royalties in 2022, in 2023 and again in 2024, not to mention our support of the progressive royalties in a separate motion last year.

The Treasurer's fake scare campaign is undermined most, however, by his own words. He himself thanked the LNP for ensuring progressive royalties passed through the House without opposition and acknowledged that the LNP state conference voted in support of retaining progressive royalties. Failing to consult and using selective memory to fuel a fake scare campaign is one thing, but making a direct and deliberate misrepresentation to the people of regional and rural Queensland is another thing altogether. It is this Treasurer who, on 15 March 2023, told 7News Mackay, 'Every cent of these new royalties is being reinvested into regional Queensland right now.'

Do members know how galling that statement is to those workers, business operators and families who live in rural and regional Queensland? Do members know how galling that statement is for those people who live in my mining communities and take their lives in their own hands every single day they drive on roads that can only be described as goat tracks? Many times I have stood in this place and talked about the disgraceful roads, the unsealed roads and the roads that are impassable at many times of the year. Our school buses cannot do school runs to take kids to school because the roads are so bad.

Those opposite are very happy to put their hands out and get their grubby little hands on the coal royalties, but they are not so keen to see that money go back into the areas where the wealth is generated. I will stand up in this place every single day and call for a fair slice of the royalties pie to be reinvested in the areas where they are generated.

Some 65 per cent of coalmines in Queensland are in my electorate and less than one per cent of royalties came back in this year's budget. Members should think about that. How about some of those royalties come back to fund critical infrastructure? How about some of those royalties come back to fix our roads and seal our roads, to give us more teachers, doctors and police officers and to give us better water infrastructure? I do not think it is unreasonable to ask that of this Treasurer.

Despite the Treasurer's commitment to regional Queensland, we are still fighting tooth and nail for a CT scanner at a hospital while the same Treasurer signs a cheque to pay for the Premier to deliver a birthday cake by private jet. Let us look at the overruns in terms of Wellcamp, Cross River Rail and the Coomera Connector—the money that has been wasted, billions of dollars. What we could do with that money in rural and regional Queensland to make the lives of people there a bit easier. It would send a message to people who live in rural and regional communities that these royalties are helping to make their lives a bit easier and that we are giving them the services they deserve and which the people in the south-east corner of this state take for granted.

The Treasurer has justified this bill based on what he alleges has been said or done by the opposition. As we already know, the reality is the opposite. On this side of the House, we speak to industry representatives in meetings and at events we attend. Those opposite would have Queenslanders believe that us speaking with mining companies and industry organisations is somehow nefarious and that we are up to no good. The fact that those opposite are treating the resource sector with such contempt is an absolute disgrace.

We will consult with industry and we will consult with industry bodies because that is what good government should do. We will send a very clear message to industry that we support industry. We want to see the continued investment and growth in industry. I will stand up in this place every single day and back the resources sector. I am not afraid to stand up and say that I support our coalminers. Every day I go out there and see what they do. I talk to our miners. It is a tough job. They put their lives on the line. I am backing our mining industry and I will continue to consult with industry because that is what good governments do.

The economic and other benefits of resources will only be realised by people who are prepared to consult because it is that consultation that has directly led to the LNP's commitment to a resources cabinet subcommittee to improve coordination between departments and ensure the right decisions are made in a timely manner. There is a commitment from the LNP to build a pipeline of resource workers to reduce the reliance on hiring from overseas or interstate and to develop our own homegrown talent. That consultation means an LNP government will expand the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy, create regional academy hubs with local on-the-ground trainers and create a pathway for women to move into operating and technical roles in the resources industry. While this Treasurer is focused on a political stunt, we on this side of the House are focused on a better future for Queensland and Queenslanders.

I take this time to say that on 20 August I made a statement related to the training of SES volunteers. My statement was incorrect and I take this opportunity to offer my unreserved apology to the House for my error.

Getting back to this bill, while this government has failed to ensure the rivers of gold from the resources sector have delivered better services and living standards for regional Queenslanders, we are focused on generating jobs and delivering regional Queenslanders their fair share.