




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2024

**RESOURCES SAFETY AND HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL;
MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (6.46 pm): I will discuss two very important issues with the bill. I will start with the Great Artesian Basin. As many know, Gregory is the largest electorate in Queensland. The bulk of the Great Artesian Basin in Queensland covers my electorate. It is something that I have grown up with. Many people have grown up with the Great Artesian Basin. Finally we have an amendment that rules out carbon capture in the Great Artesian Basin. I thank the government for that. It has only happened now. On 17 April I asked the Premier whether he would rule out carbon capture in the Great Artesian Basin. He went all over the place. He did not commit to it. I do not know why. It was simple: reject it straightaway.

Last month the Premier and cabinet went to Beef Week. They flew up there in their hats, checked shirts, moleskins and RM Williams. As I have said a couple of times in this House, the only places that make money when the Labor Party go out west are the RM Williams store in Queen Street and the RM Williams store in Chermside. The Premier suddenly got the message that you cannot put anything into the Great Artesian Basin. The Great Artesian Basin is not just there for the cattle industry; it is also there for human consumption. In places like Windorah or Birdsville, the only water source is the Great Artesian Basin. We shower in it, we clean our teeth with it, we wash our potatoes in it—we use it nonstop. Out in the area around the Great Artesian Basin, especially in the Channel Country, it does not rain a lot. We have had some very good seasons over the last couple of years. Head out there for a holiday and you will see the Channel Country completely in bloom with wildflowers. However, there have been times in the past when it has not rained for five or six years and we rely heavily on the Great Artesian Basin. We do not need anything put in the Great Artesian Basin which could cause a problem with our ability to use that water to drink or shower in. I think it is time the federal government stepped in. I am talking about the federal environment minister. The Great Artesian Basin also covers the Northern Territory, South Australia and down to Dubbo in New South Wales. We need to protect it as a major water resource.

To give members an understanding, to us the Great Artesian Basin is like the Great Barrier Reef is to the people on the east coast. That is how important it is to us. We have to protect everything we can. We should also continue the capping program for the Great Artesian Basin to ensure we have the right pressures out there to ensure people have the delivery of the water that they need to be able to continue to do what they do with it.

I have looked at the budget papers and there is nothing in them for regional Queensland, and certainly nothing for the Gregory electorate. The government could have put more money into the capping of the Great Artesian Basin. If the government did that, it would help us a lot. It is under the minister's watch. I ask the minister to continue to cap the Great Artesian Basin and put more money into that.

Another issue which is dear to my heart and on which I have been campaigning for a long time is, of course, small miners. They include the sapphire miners in the Gemfields and the opal miners at Winton or at Opalton, down towards Quilpie. Over the last two to 2½ years they have had a very hard time. The threat and talk of legislation coming into their industry has made them very nervous about what their futures. At the start of this process, we had concerns about people who just go out, get a claim and fossick not having that claim after a while. We are talking about people who sometimes just do not want to be a part of the big cities or the big towns but just want to live in their small shacks and do a bit of fossicking. Not only do they fossick and, hopefully, find something, but they contribute to communities such as the Gemfields and Winton. They are the first ones to sign up for the Rural Fire Brigade. They are the first ones to join the SES. They are the first ones to ensure they are a part of the community. They love living that lifestyle.

For many people, that is not the lifestyle they want. They do not want to live in a tin shed with a hole beside them and try to dig up some gemstones or opals. Ninety-nine per cent of these people are good citizens who do the right thing and play their part in the community. For some reason—and I absolutely encourage them to do this—they want to live off the grid. They do not want to be in the main part of society.

A long time ago I said to the minister that if we move them on it will impact homelessness in our community. Where are they going to live? They love living there. They do not have a lot of money. They can afford to live there. Are we going to put them under the bridge over the Nogoa River in Emerald? Is that where they are going to live? We need to keep them comfortable and playing their part in society. I expect that we have better consultation with these people, because they are good people. They have been around for a very long time.

I know one of the original families of the gemfields—the Richardsons. Back in, I think, 1880, Archibald Richardson was a surveyor for Queensland Rail. He surveyed all the way from Rockhampton to Emerald. He went to Anakie, had a look around, saw some sparkling rocks in the ground, threw the surveyor job in and became a gem miner. The Richardsons have been there since 1880. They are still there today as gem miners. They are a significant family who has played a big part in establishing the gem industry and they deserve to be protected. There are so many other families such as them. I call on the minister to provide more consultation. Let's get on with it and ensure they have a great lifestyle.