




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 12 September 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Resources Industries, Worker Safety and Health

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals) (10.06 am): The Miles government will always back worker safety, and we have a proud record of doing exactly that. The health and safety of workers has always been, and always will be, my No. 1 priority. I am proud to say that we have implemented the most substantial suite of reforms to mine safety and health in 20 years. These include: better detection and prevention of black lung and other mine dust lung diseases; an improved safety net for affected workers; and the introduction of the Heart 5 mobile health unit which, for two years now, has been travelling around the state offering free lung checks to former mine and quarry workers. Heart 5 has travelled 100,000 kilometres, which is equivalent to 2½ times around the Earth, and tested more than 1,000 retired workers in those two years.

We have also introduced a dedicated service to support workers suffering from occupational lung disease with their compensation claims. We have established an independent resources safety health regulator called Resources Safety & Health Queensland. Other reforms include reducing the allowable mine dust levels at both coal and mineral mines as well as quarries, and Queensland has also led the nation when it comes to keeping workers safe from the dangers of engineered stone. I am proud that our government banned engineered stone—with the ban coming into effect in full from 1 July—getting it out of our workplaces at the first possible opportunity. Our government will do whatever it takes to protect Queensland workers from dust lung disease.

We have seen in the past what happens when governments do not act quickly enough. We want to make our mines, quarries, construction and manufacturing sites safe from dust lung diseases. We will never rest on our laurels when it comes to protecting Queensland workers, but we know that more can always be done, particularly as technology changes. Right now, the process is being finalised to appoint a new Resources Safety & Health Commissioner. The first order of business that I will be asking the commissioner to look at is what improvements can be made for dust monitoring in our mineral mines and quarry sector. The priority will be to ensure the management of respirable dust is consistent across all of industry. No matter where you work—above ground, below ground or in quarries—our government wants to ensure best practice is being undertaken.

I will also be asking the new commission to work with the Mining Safety and Health Advisory Committee to ensure our guidelines in relation to dust monitoring are world's best practice. We know there are advantages with new technology potentially able to detect dust quicker through real-time monitoring. The resource industry embraces technology and the benefits it can bring. It is important we look to how we can use it in the health and safety context as well. Consultation is key to improving worker safety, and that is why I want the commission to work with worker representative groups and, of course, the industry. We make no apologies for ensuring worker health and safety is our No. 1 priority and I look forward to this work being done. It is only the Miles government that will always back our workers' health and safety.

Mr Speaker, I take this time to thank you for your support and guidance, particularly in my former role as deputy speaker. Being Speaker of this parliament is quite unique, but doing it for two consecutive terms is more 'uniquer'.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr STEWART: I was not an English teacher! I wish you all the very best for the future and 'may the force be with you'.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Now I am going to add 'uniquer' to the parliamentary vocabulary as well as 'Hanscript' and 'hectacres'. We have a few and it is fantastic.