



Speech By
David Lee

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2025

CORONERS (MINING AND RESOURCES CORONER) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr LEE** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (8.31 pm): I rise to speak to the Coroners (Mining and Resources Coroner) Amendment Bill 2025. This is a bill to amend the Coroners Act 2003 to ensure that all mining related reportable deaths on Queensland's mine, quarry, gas and petroleum sites are thoroughly investigated. This bill is relevant to my electorate in Hervey Bay because our residents have mothers, fathers, sons, daughters and relatives who may work or are connected to the mining resources sector as FIFOs. The Crisafulli government is doing what we said we would do: establishing a dedicated Mining and Resources Coroner who will conduct investigations and inquests for all accidental mining related reportable deaths.

The jurisdiction of a mining warden has a long history in Queensland and dates back to the Goldfields Act 1874. Inquiries before 2001 into fatal and serious accidents were conducted by a mining warden in the mining warden's court. Labor put the safety of mining workers on the line when it terminated the mining warden's court in 2001. Labor might say they stand up for workers, but their actions towards the hardworking men and women in the mining resources sector show their contempt for legitimate preventable incidents onsite. The Crisafulli government has done more in one year than Labor has done in 20 years to reform this important legislation.

This bill is about restoring a vital layer of accountability that Labor walked away from. The introduction of the Mining and Resources Coroner sends a clear message that workers' safety comes first in Queensland. Establishing the role of a Mining and Resources Coroner is the most effective way to address current concerns about protracted waiting times for coronial matters to be heard. The Coroners Act currently provides that a coroner must investigate a reportable death including a self-inflicted death. If the Coroners Act does not mandate an inquest, an inquest is only conducted if it is in the public interest. In her 12 June 2025 introductory speech the Attorney-General said—

Between 2014 and 2024 there have been 27 accidental mining related deaths investigated by Resources Safety & Health Queensland. During the same period coronial inquests have been held for two deaths as well as for two deaths that occurred prior to 2014.

This bill removes the coroner's discretion and provides that inquests must be conducted for all mining related reportable deaths. The Crisafulli government has listened to the families that have suffered the loss of loved ones in Queensland's mines and quarries. We will establish a dedicated coroner who will investigate and conduct mandatory inquests for all accidental mining reportable deaths. When the Mining and Resources Coroner is not dealing with mine related matters, the role will undertake general coronial work to assist in finalising coronial matters and help reduce the backlog of investigations and inquests. As stated in the explanatory notes—

Clause 5 of the Bill amends the Coroners Act to provide that a person's death will be a mining related reportable death if:

- the death was a reportable death under section 8(3)(b) of the Coroners Act, meaning the death was a violent or otherwise unnatural death; and

- the person died at any time after receiving a mining related injury that caused the death or contributed to the death and without which the person would not have died; and
- the mining related injury was received at a coal mine, mine (or quarry), or at a specified petroleum and gas site; and
- the person's injury is not intentionally self-inflicted.

On that last point, self-inflicted death is not excluded, as falsely claimed, from the coroner's jurisdiction. It remains a reportable death under the Coroners Act. This bill further defines a mining related injury as being within the meaning of legislation such as section 9 of the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act and so on.

The Mining and Resources Coroner will have all of the powers and functions of a coroner to conduct investigations and inquests for accidental mining related reportable deaths under the Coroners Act 2003, including: the power to order a person to give evidence as a witness; requiring a person to produce a document; inspect anything produced at the inquest, copy and keep it for a reasonable period; and engage experts to provide information relevant to the matter under investigation.

This bill does not change the existing coronial process, where an inquest can only commence once any related prosecutions have been finalised. If charges are not laid, the Mining and Resources Coroner will be able to commence the inquest as soon as possible.

The Mining and Resources Coroner also has a critical role in improving the safety in one of our most critical industries by making written recommendations about anything connected to a reportable death with the aim of preventing further deaths.

Clause 20 of the bill provides for transitional provisions to ensure clarity on how the Mining and Resources Coroner will investigate injuries and deaths that occur before or after the commencement of the bill. The bill provides for mining related reportable deaths that occur after commencement of this bill. Relevantly, these deaths will be subject to an investigation and mandatory inquest by the Mining and Resources Coroner. Mining related reportable deaths that occur before the commencement of the bill will be subject to an investigation and mandatory inquest by the Mining and Resources Coroner.

Clause 20 of the bill provides for the application of the act in relation to a pre-commencement mining death if: before the commencement of the bill the investigating coroner into the death has not made all of the findings into the reportable death; an investigation has not gone to an inquest; a pre-inquest conference has not taken place; and the current coroner has not stopped the investigation into the death under section 12(2) of the Coroners Act.

For mining reportable deaths that occur before the commencement there is an ability for the Mining and Resources Coroner not to hold an inquest if satisfied that it is not in the public interest. The bill provides that, in deciding whether it is not in the public interest to hold the inquest, the Mining and Resources Coroner must: consult with and consider the views of a family member of the deceased; consider the length of time since the death occurred; and consider when the investigation is likely to be completed.

The bill also provides that if a decision has not been made to hold an inquest by the State Coroner or District Court under section 30 of the Coroners Act then the Mining and Resources Coroner is not to hold an inquest into that matter. This is to uphold the finality of decisions made before commencement.

Furthermore, the bill provides for some minor amendments such as the appointment of more than one deputy state coroner and enables preliminary examinations to occur after a death that has been reported to the coroner rather than limiting them to cases reported to police officers.

The Crisafulli government will also establish within the Coroners Court of Queensland a liaison engagement position. This liaison person will provide communication with families throughout the coronial investigation and inquest. The Coroners Court will also work closely with the specialist investigation liaison officers from the Office of Industrial Relations.

In closing, this bill establishes the position of the Mining and Resources Coroner and the formal appointment process. The Governor in Council will appoint a local coroner as the Mining and Resources Coroner in consultation with the State Coroner and the Chief Magistrate. I commend the Coroners (Mining and Resources Coroner) Amendment Bill 2025 to the House.