



Speech By  
**James Martin**


**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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## **CORONERS (MINING AND RESOURCES CORONER) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Second Reading**

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (8.20 pm): I rise today to support the Coroners (Mining and Resources Coroner) Amendment Bill 2025. The establishment of a dedicated Mining and Resources Coroner is a positive step forward ensuring all accidental mining related deaths, including those in coalmines and quarries and at specified petroleum and gas sites, are subject to mandatory and specialised coronial investigations and inquests. Under the bill, the new coroner will have full coronial powers and the authority to deliver findings and recommendations to prevent future tragedies. This delivers much needed answers to grieving families and enhances transparency, accountability and proactive safety improvements within the mining industry.

While this legislation is welcome, it is sadly inadequate. Submissions to the committee from stakeholders emphasise that the bill excludes some critical categories of mining related deaths including the following. It excludes suicides and suspected suicides, which often stem from workplace conditions, systemic stresses associated with mining or FIFO lifestyles. Strangely, the explanatory notes suggest suicide will be considered, but it was not present in the bill itself. That was unusual. It fails to include deaths caused by occupational illness such as mine dust lung disease, despite these being directly attributed to long-term mining exposure. It does not cover transport related deaths either, such as workers travelling to or from mine sites, despite these journeys being requirements of the job.

The committee submissions rightly argued that if the government is setting up a dedicated mining coroner with expertise in the mining industry then why exclude these deaths? It just does not seem to make sense. Regarding suicide, the Coronial Assistance Legal Service stated—

Suicides in mining are a contemporary societal and industrial issue that should be proactively addressed by the Act. Mining is recognised as a locational, institutional and occupational setting with an elevated suicide risk.

Excluding suicide from the scope of the Mining and Resources Coroner's investigation runs directly counter to the intent of this bill, which aims to provide timely information to affected families and enhance safety across the mining and resources sector. Psychosocial safety must be treated with the same importance as physical safety on mine sites, yet it is clear, and disappointing, that the LNP do not share this view.

Another issue relates to deaths due to occupational illness. The scope of the Mining and Resources Coroner does not include diseases or illnesses arising from mine work such as mine dust lung disease. This exclusion undermines the coroner's role in making recommendations to improve worker safety and it ignores a critical health and safety issue inherent in many mining operations. If the government were truly committed to improving safety conditions for future generations it would not shy away from assigning this vital responsibility to the Mining and Resources Coroner. The Queensland Law Society's submission to the committee also took issue with this, stating—

If there is a possible causal link between the death and the 'in scope' work activity, the death should be treated in the same way as if it resulted from a physical incident causing death and be referred to the MRC.

Another issue relates to transport related deaths. That is extremely relevant to this sector. Mining and resource sector workers face a unique challenge in the travel to and from remote worksites. Shiftwork in the industry often involves long hours, early starts, late finishes and overnight shifts. These demanding schedules can cause significant fatigue, increasing the risk of accidents when workers drive tired or distracted. Despite this, the government has excluded motor vehicle fatalities occurring during travel to and from mine sites from the scope of the Mining and Resources Coroner's investigation. This is reflected in the submission from the Mining and Energy Union which states—

In the mining industry, where shift work, long hours, early starts and late finishes are common, coal mine workers are especially vulnerable to fatigue.

The Labor opposition and other stakeholders, including the QLS and the MEU, have called for the scope to be expanded to include these categories to ensure comprehensive, industry-specific scrutiny. Only then can we address systemic causes of death beyond the current narrow definition in the bill so we can truly drive preventive active and strengthen worker protection.

It was disappointing to see that the LNP's response to these sensible suggestions was that they are 'not going to duplicate work that's already undertaken by agencies like the Queensland Police Service'. They went on to say, 'The scope of the mining coroner's investigation will be anchored around mining safety because mining safety in our resources sector is not negotiable.' Sadly, the statement, in my opinion, highlights the complete disregard of the government to consider the variety of resource sector specific safety concerns that can result in the harm of resource workers. Does the minister not care about psychosocial safety or mining road safety or the illnesses resource sector workers contract after years of onsite work? It is a narrow-minded approach to safety whilst also creating an industry-specific coronial position, highlighting the incompetency of this government.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): Order, members!

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at what this member is saying and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Can I point out that the amount of cross-chamber chatter and the amount of noise made it hard for me to hear what the member was saying. Member, you have been asked to withdraw.

**Mr MARTIN:** I withdraw. I note, too, that the government has ignored the concerns of one of its own members, the member for Mirani. I know that a number of members on this side of the House have given a shout-out to the member for Mirani. Even though he is a member of the LNP, I do not mind the member for Mirani that much. Probably the No. 1 reason I like him is that he replaced a One Nation member. I would much rather have an LNP member in this House than a member of One Nation. That is why we will put them last in Hinchinbrook. Maybe the LNP could do the same. The member for Mirani in the committee hearing stated—

Fatigue is a big issue for a lot of my constituents ... I know that the safety standards around fatigue management can vary across different mines—whether they can drive home straight after they finish their stint ...

I have to say that I agree with what the member for Mirani said there. It is disappointing that his own side did not agree with him.

Let me now turn to the record of the LNP on issues directly related to this bill, particularly the contradiction between its professed concern for workers and what the LNP actually does for workers. Unfortunately, the LNP has repeatedly voted against workers' rights and important health and safety legislation in the past, many of which relate directly to the bill that we are currently debating. Time and again, when presented with legislation that would have made Queensland workplaces safer and fairer, including for people in the mining industry, the LNP have voted against it.

Under this bill, it is true that the new coroner will have coronial powers and the authority to deliver findings and recommendations, but the point is that we need to ensure that as many of these tragedies can be avoided in the first place and not limit the coroner's scope. To that effect, every worker has the right to come home safe at the end of their shift. Tragically, too many Queensland families know the heartbreak of losing a loved one to a preventable workplace incident.

The industrial manslaughter laws, which we championed, are designed to hold company directors and senior officers criminally accountable when negligence leads to a worker's death. It sends a clear message: if you cut corners on safety and a worker dies, including in the mining industry, you cannot hide behind corporate structures and you will be held responsible. Of course, the LNP, we remember, opposed these laws, claiming existing laws were sufficient. By voting against industrial manslaughter laws, the LNP once again sided with dodgy operators over workers' lives and, if they had their way—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance to the long title of the bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): I have not heard anything that stands out to me at the moment, but I caution the member for Stretton to please stay within the long title of the bill. While I have you there, there is a bit of cross-chamber chatter. Can we please give the member, regardless of which side they are on, some respect when they are on their feet.

**Mr MARTIN:** The actions of the LNP speak volumes about their priorities. Put simply, the LNP is always happy to choose optics and profit over the health and safety of workers. It is all well and good to have new functions and powers to investigate mining deaths, but we should ensure that they never have to be investigated in the first place, including those due to suicide, occupational illness and transport related deaths.

Having said that, the bill represents a step which we all support—that is, creating a specialised coroner position with the power to conduct mandatory inquests, deliver findings and hold mining companies to account. While I commend this development, I again emphasise that the bill is still inadequate and should be strengthened. I urge those opposite to support sensible amendments to include suicide and suspected suicides, occupational disease and deaths arising from work related travel. In doing so, we reinforce the highest standards of worker safety, transparency and justice.

We honour the memory of every mining life lost, whether through accident, illness, stress, suicide or other circumstance and not just a cross-section of miners who fit into a narrow specific definition.