



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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CORONERS (MINING AND RESOURCES CORONER) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr J KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.10 pm): Once again the Premier apparently does what he says—he walks the talk, he means what he says, blah, de-blah, blah, blah—we have heard it all before. We heard it when he voted for the Path to Treaty and then came in here and shut it down. That is what he meant when he said and did what he did. It was all walks the talk and did all that stuff, and then when he said he was going to keep Queenslanders safe and he came in here and banned pill testing without giving anybody a chance to speak on that.

Now we have yet another example of where they have made a promise to re-establish a mining warden's court and the LNP and the Premier bring this bill in here—this bill. So while we support this, and we want to improve it via the member for Gaven's very sensible amendments, it certainly goes nowhere near the promises that were made before the election, and I am sure the people of Queensland are getting very used to that. The LNP have turned their backs once again on miners and mining communities.

I was part of the black lung select committee. I did several years of work on the black lung select committee, in fact. I want to talk about the actual name—the real name—of black lung disease. It is officially known as coal workers' pneumoconiosis.

Mr Power: Coal workers.

Mr J KELLY: Coal workers. Another word for 'coal worker' might be 'miner', and a mining coroner might want to have to look at a disease that kills people if it is acquired in a coalmine. That is exactly where you acquire coal workers' pneumoconiosis. Of course, if you are transporting coal in the transport industry, you can also be exposed to it.

We spent a lot of time listening to these communities that have been impacted by this terrible disease. These are people who work hard so that our state can prosper. They know they are in a risky job, but they do it for the benefit of the whole state, and they are prepared, via their unions, to work with employers or anybody who wants to make workplaces safe.

Nobody wants us to ever have to investigate mining related deaths—we do not want them—but Labor stands committed, as it always has, to ensuring that every worker returns home safely. While I was on this committee, I saw firsthand the impact of black lung disease. If detected early, coal workers' pneumoconiosis can be controlled and people can live a long and healthy life. If detected later, the impacts can be severely life-limiting.

When we conducted this inquiry, we found four decades of complex denial, mass delusion and a complete departure from any need to control or respond to a disease that was considered officially eradicated. The reality is it had not been eradicated. Thanks to this inquiry, particularly the work of Dr Anthony Lynham, a wide range of policies and procedures have been implemented to prevent, detect

and respond to this disease. However, it is still likely that circumstances will arise where people will develop dust related diseases. As we saw over the four decades the existence and impacts of this disease were denied, the circumstances arising as a result can be quite complex. The things that can lead to it in one situation can be very different to another situation, and that is why it is imperative that in each case we investigate, via a coroner, the circumstances that lead to the individual developing this disease and sadly, in these cases, dying of this disease.

To exempt deaths related to dust lung disease is very distressing. It almost feels like we are back to the decades of denial that preceded the black lung inquiry. The only way we will fully understand what caused a dust related death and prevent others from occurring is to include them in this bill. That is why I fully support the amendments.

I have worked over the years with many nurses whose partners are FIFO miners and I have many FIFO workers who live in my community. I have seen the impacts that FIFO can have on families. When we hear the evidence from Ms Klaire Coles from the Coronial Assistance Legal Service that suicides amongst FIFO and resource sector workers occur at disproportionately higher rates and often in complex environments shaped by isolation, stigma and work related pressure, it should make us all sit up and take notice.

When I led the government's inquiry into how to make the lives of people with mental health and addiction issues better, we spent a lot of time considering suicide and we certainly looked at sector and occupation-specific suicide risk. I do want to acknowledge the great work of Mates in Construction. I know the CFMEU cop a lot of flak in this place, but I think anybody who understands the work of Mates in Construction would know that is an organisation that anybody who is involved in setting it up would be proud of. It is an organisation that has dedicated itself to understanding and preventing workplace suicide. It is a complex issue, and solutions to preventing workplace related suicides demand a multifaceted approach. Where we find a focal point of suicides in a specific setting or related to a specific occupational group with some similarities, there are opportunities to examine the deaths and consider ways to prevent them in the future. The best way to do that is to consider each individual death and see if there are things we can learn to prevent them in the future. That is why it is essential that these suicides should be captured by this legislation, and that is why I support the member for Gaven's amendments.

Labor remains committed, as always, to keeping all workers safe. Labor is prepared to amend and improve this flawed legislation. We should all be putting the lives of miners first and supporting these amendments.