



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

TerraCom Resources

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.12 pm): I rise to inform the House of serious issues regarding the operation of the Blair Athol coalmine in Central Queensland by TerraCom Ltd. With ownership of a coalmine comes responsibility and, more importantly, accountability. In this case there are some serious questions to be asked around access to funds held in the financial assurance scheme.

This issue involves none other than a former Brisbane lord mayor, a former Labor minister, a former Townsville Labor mayor, a former Labor state secretary and two former Labor treasurers. It is about profit for Labor heavyweights at the expense of Queensland.

This saga began in July 2016 when TerraCom purchased the Blair Athol mine for the princely sum of \$1. In April 2017, a month after Jim Soorley was appointed to the board, the mine was transferred to Orion, a wholly owned subsidiary of TerraCom. In July that year, Orion met with the Department of Environment and Science officials at least four times to discuss outstanding requirements for the financial assurance plan.

During and following those meetings, departmental staff raised the issue of a 'topsoil deficit' and the need to be aware of the possible involvement of Jim Soorley. Further, a departmental briefing note following those meetings refers to the possible need to 'increase significantly the amount of financial assurance required'. Yet on that same date and in the space of six hours, the department reversed its decision to include the cost of the removal of the coal handling and processing plant from the financial assurance.

Over the next 12 months, TerraCom received a refund of \$5 million from the financial assurance fund of \$80 million that was paid and transferred by the mine's previous owner. This was despite the fact that TerraCom effectively reduced the total rehabilitation area and breached the conditions of the mining lease by transporting coal by road instead of rail for a period of six months. It continues: in July last year another \$3 million was returned to TerraCom. Then in January another \$27 million was released to TerraCom.

This whole sorry tale reeks of corruption. Queenslanders are right to ask how a company with deep Labor roots, a company that met with senior Labor officials and a company that donated only to Labor can effectively receive \$35 million of funds held to rehabilitate a mine site that they purchased for \$1.

For a company that breaches its mining lease conditions and reduces the amount of rehabilitated land to receive these refunds simply cannot be seen as a coincidence. This Labor government has a lot of explaining to do, and Queenslanders have a right to demand answers because, make no mistake, this is a serious issue with massive financial implications for this state.