



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Mining Industry, Death; Mining Industry, Safety

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.25 pm): I would like to begin by conveying my deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the miner who lost his life overnight at Fitzroy Australia Resources' Carborough Downs mine site. It is a tragic event and something that has been felt across the Central Queensland coalfields.

Last week I went underground at the Middlemount coalmine. Let me say that until you have done that, you have no idea the conditions these men and women work in. Until you have seen it with your own eyes, you have no idea of the sacrifices they make. I can proudly say that my appreciation for each and every worker in our resources industry was bolstered even further owing to that experience. The value of the sacrifices they make for their families, our communities and our state has been even further inflated owing to that experience.

That appreciation and value is in stark contrast to that shown by those opposite. With seven deaths in 16 months in our mines and quarries, we would have to say that there are serious question marks around mining safety in this state. On 21 August this year, I stood in this place and moved a motion for a parliamentary inquiry into mine safety—a motion that those opposite opposed. Why did they oppose it? They opposed it in the name of petty politics and self-interest.

This government has been caught out and, more importantly, the minister responsible for mines in this state has been caught out. Let me explain. The total number of coalmine audits scheduled for 2018-19 was lower than the number scheduled for 2017-18. Even with that reduction, the scheduled numbers were not met. In October the minister said that inspections were reduced while the number of audits increased. The total number of audits did not increase. There were 65 in 2017-18, down to 60 in 2018-19. The bottom line is that both the number of total audits in Queensland's resources sector and the number of inspections are down. That should be ringing alarm bells across the resources sector in this state.

When it comes to mine safety, instead of focusing on the safety of Queensland workers, the minister has dropped the ball. The member for Keppel in her response to my motion claimed that she represents miners and then had the hide to say that a parliamentary inquiry into the safety of those miners would be a waste of money. The member for Bancroft told us how hard his government was working on mine safety. My response to the member for Bancroft is that it is simply not working. For the chair of that committee to downplay the need for a safety inquiry into Queensland's natural resources and mining industry is almost beyond belief.

This is a government that said that an inquiry would stop the mine safety resets. The truth is that an inquiry would supplement those mine safety resets by further investigating the causes of and the possible solutions to these tragedies. While the minister and the member for Keppel waxed lyrical about the opportunity for workers to share their stories, they completely ignored the protections that a parliamentary inquiry offers—the same protections those members and others on that side of the House use to downplay the importance of getting to the bottom of issues in Queensland's mines.

As the member for Burdekin, I represent a region of our state that is blessed with many resources. As the shadow minister for natural resources and mines, I am proud to represent all of the resources industries across this state. At the heart of those resources is our people. Those people, their families, their friends and their colleagues deserve answers. Those people deserve a minister who is focused on safety in our mines. Those people deserve a government that values them and the contribution they make.

In August I said that six deaths in 12 months is simply not good enough. Today we face the reality that seven lives have been lost in Queensland mines in 16 months. The response from this government is not good enough. To those opposite I say that people are more important than politics; people are more important than your throwaway lines. To Queensland's resource workers, their families, their friends and colleagues I say that you deserve better. You deserve the truth. You have my commitment that I and the LNP will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with you through the good times and the bad and we will continue to fight for the truth that you deserve.