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MEDIA RELEASE

The regions just don't register

Member for Burdekin and Shadow Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Dale Last, believes the Queensland government has "let down the resources section again" but said this failure was literally about life and death.

Following the introduction of mandatory reporting of dust-related diseases in July, Mr Last asked Health Minister, Steven Miles, for the number and locations of the specialists who were required to report diseases and said the reply left him stunned.

"According to the Royal Australian College of Physicians, of the 28 independent physicians who are registered Occupational and Environmental Medicine specialists, only 6 are located in or service regional Queensland," Mr Last said.

"That's a significant difference to the numbers the Minister quoted but their locations are what is really alarming."

"Mandatory reporting of dust-related diseases was a key recommendation of the Coal Worker's Pneumoconiosis Inquiry but, under the current government, the system provides little cover for the areas where resource workers actually live."

"Even after the Adani debacle this government doesn't realise that natural resources workers live in regional Queensland."

"How can the government say they value the health of mine workers and then fail to provide access to the services they need for their health?"

"We've already seen the government go against the committee's recommendation and base the Mine Safety and Health Authority in Brisbane but this is a new low."

Mr Last said he fully supported a dust register to protect workers in the resources sector and that, for the system to be effective, it needed to be available to all workers.

"The committee that made these recommendations was a bi-partisan committee, so this isn't about politics; it's about the health of the workers," Mr Last said.

“I’m happy to work with the government to make these services available in regional Queensland but I’m not going to sit back and let this commitment be forgotten or under-delivered.”

“The resources sector makes a massive contribution to the Queensland economy and, without the workers, that contribution stops so we need to ensure their health is a high priority.”

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Source: Reply to Question on Notice: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2019/1537-2019.pdf>

Source: Location of specialists: <https://www.racp.edu.au/about/college-structure/australasian-faculty-of-occupational-and-environmental-medicine/find-a-consultant-nsw-qld#qld>