



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Dawson Electorate: Employment

SPEECH

Wednesday, 29 October 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Christensen, George, MP	Question No.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (09:33): As the chair of the Australia-Philippines parliamentary network, I associate myself with the member for Greenway's superb comments.

Last night, on a single website, there were 1,331 properties advertised for rent in the city of Mackay. Large traders are reporting a 60 per cent drop-off in trade; staff are being slashed; and thousands of families unable to find work have left Mackay. Mining communities are suffering even more. Despite having a wealth of local skilled and experienced miners, two local mines fly in 100 per cent of their workforce from Brisbane and Cairns. That absurd situation is a result of the then Bligh Labor government's decision to approve 100 per cent fly-in fly-out operations at the Caval Ridge and Daunia mines, run by BMA.

At the time I called on the Bligh government not to allow this regional discrimination. Ironically, Labor are trying to distance themselves from the decision that they made when they were in government. The current Labor leader, Annastacia Palaszczuk, visited Central Queensland recently to announce that, if elected, they will review the 100 per cent FIFO mines decision that her government had earlier made. So they will take a look at it. That is akin to a firebug setting fire to your house and then, after you have kicked them out, promising to have a close look at the fire if you let them back in.

Since before the approval was given in 2011, I have raised the issue in federal parliament; I have asked ministers to intervene; I have held numerous meetings with BMA; and I have spoken out against 100 per cent FIFO. Since she was elected last year, the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, has joined the fight against this regional discrimination. But it is only now, a few months out from the state election, that Queensland Labor has decided to have a look at the fire that they lit—if Queenslanders let them back in the house.

There has been some comment recently from other out-of-town political figures that seem to suggest some support for 100 per cent fly-in fly out mines, but, regardless of any other commentary by any other political figure of any political persuasion, my stance has not changed from day one on this matter—and it will not change.

While I continue to lobby the Queensland government for intervention, I am realistic enough to know there is little that can be done to put out the fire that Labor lit, because, if their approval is revoked by the Queensland government, BMA will no doubt find a legal or procedural way around that decision. So ultimately any change in these fly-in fly-out mines must come from BMA.

There is a groundswell of anger in my local community about FIFO and fingers are pointing directly at BMA. The member for Capricornia and I will be meeting with a group of concerned businesspeople and community people in Mackay on Friday, and I will be launching a community campaign against BMA's 100 per cent fly-in fly-out mines. The campaign's aim will be to convince BMA to do the right thing: relax or dump their 100 per cent FIFO policy at these mines and support the communities that have supported BMA.