



STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr CG Whiting MP (Chair)
Mr JE Madden MP
Mr BA Mickelberg MP
Mr PT Weir MP

Member in attendance:

Mr MC Berkman MP

Staff present:

Dr J Dewar (Committee Secretary)

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE MINERAL RESOURCES (GALILEE BASIN) AMENDMENT BILL 2018

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Moranbah

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The committee met at 6.05 pm.

CHAIR: Good evening. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather today. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the recent tragedy that has occurred at the Moranbah North mine and the impact this has had on the community. We extend our sympathy and our thoughts to the Hardwick family and colleagues.

On 31 October 2018 Mr Michael Berkman MP, the member for Maiwar, introduced the Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018 to the parliament. This bill has been referred to the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee for examination with a report date of 30 April 2019. Thank you for your interest and your attendance here today. My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and the chair of the committee. The other committee members here with me today are Mr Pat Weir, deputy chair and member for Condamine; Mr Jim Madden, member for Ipswich West; and Mr Brent Mickelberg, member for Buderim. We have the member for Maiwar, Michael Berkman, here with us today as well.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing orders and rules of the parliament. All those present today should note that it is possible you might be filmed or photographed. I ask everyone to turn off mobile phones or put them on silent. Today's proceedings are similar to the proceedings of parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. In this regard I remind members of the public that under standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath, but evidence should be given in good faith. Intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

BAKER, Ms Anne, Mayor, Isaac Regional Council

LACEY, Ms Gina, Councillor, Isaac Regional Council

STEVENSON, Mr Gary, Chief Executive Officer, Isaac Regional Council

UREN, Mrs Mary-Anne, Senior Adviser, Isaac Regional Council

VEA VEA, Ms Kelly, Deputy Mayor and Councillor, Isaac Regional Council

CHAIR: Who would like to lead off with an opening statement?

Mayor Baker: Good evening, everybody, on behalf of Isaac Regional Council. Can I firstly acknowledge our Barada Barna people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet tonight, and offer my respects to elders both past and present. I also recognise those whose ongoing efforts to promote and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures will leave a lasting legacy for our future elders and leaders. I would like to acknowledge the membership of the Queensland parliamentary committee that is here with us tonight led by yourself, Chris, and also the proponent of the amendment bill, Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar.

Welcome to Moranbah. Moranbah is the heart—the absolute heart—of the Isaac region and the Bowen Basin. Thank you for providing Isaac Regional Council with the opportunity to expand on our written submission to the inquiry into the mineral resource amendment bill 2018 at this hearing. It is an absolute privilege for me to be able to address the inquiry as the mayor of Isaac Regional Council.

At the table with me tonight I am joined by my council colleagues: Deputy Mayor Kelly Vea Vea and Councillor Gina Lacey, who are divisional councillors and reside in the community of Moranbah; our chief executive officer, Gary Stevenson, and senior adviser to the mayor and CEO, Mary-Anne Uren.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Isaac region is regarded as the resource capital of Queensland. The Isaac region produces more than half of the saleable coal in this state and in this country. Our rich deposits of metallurgical and thermal coal in the Bowen Basin have helped to feed, to build and Moranbah

to power communities for generations. The Isaac is currently home to 26 active coalmines, with further major projects under development including those planned for the Galilee Basin. We are very proud of the role our region has played and is playing in helping to energise the world. Our resource sector contributed no less than \$1.5 billion in royalties out of a Queensland total of \$3.8 billion in the 2017-18 time frame. Mining, construction and manufacturing related to mining directly employs over 60 per cent of the Isaac region's workforce.

In response to the bill and to be very clear, Isaac Regional Council fundamentally opposes the proposed amendment bill. This council as the elected voice of this community has been, and always will be, supportive of responsible—I repeat: responsible—planned development within the resource industry. Responsible, planned development is development which has been rigorously vetted and approved by the state and federal governments, compliant with all environmental approvals and monitoring requirements, compliant with all operational approvals and delivers a genuine economic or social dividend to the communities that bear the impact of such developments. We expect that any approval for a resource project absolutely considers the immediate surrounding environment and wider impacts from pit to port and beyond and is subject to very stringent environmental controls to address and mitigate impacts.

Mining in the Isaac region traces its origins back to the mid-19th century with the discovery of gold and, later on, copper in the Clermont district. Coalmining commenced in the late 1900s and our region was home to Queensland's first open-cut coalmine, which is Blair Athol in Clermont. The community of Moranbah is one of Queensland's youngest towns. It was established in the early 1970s to support the intensification of open-cut and underground mining in the surrounding area as the vast resources of the Bowen Basin were opened up. This unlocked wealth has helped build Queensland over many decades and provided employment for generations of regional Queenslanders. I provide this historical context to the committee because, in addition to more than a century of mining, the agricultural sector has productively coexisted alongside extractive operations and continues to do so as we speak.

The gross annual value of Isaac agricultural commodities is more than half a billion dollars. This is primarily around livestock, sugar and grains along with other smaller industries such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The beef industry alone is valued at over \$2 billion annually, and the Isaac region is home to Queensland's second largest cattle herd. The development of the Bowen Basin over half a century is absolutely living, demonstrated, positive proof that mining, agriculture and the wider environment can coexist.

At a regional level here in Central Queensland, the resources sector contributes \$3.4 billion annually in direct expenditure just to Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday businesses and community organisations. This creates the flow-on benefit of an additional \$4.9 billion with expenditure from the supply chain and employee spending.

To move on to the Galilee Basin, which is relevant to the bill, adjacent to the Bowen Basin are the vast untapped resources of the Galilee Basin, an area of some 247,000 square kilometres. It is estimated that the Galilee holds thermal coal reserves of around 29 billion tonnes. To be clear from the outset, the Galilee Basin is not only about one particular project; we are positioning and talking about the Galilee Basin. This council, can I say, is no cheerleader for any individual mining project, individual mining developer or multinational company. Our absolute focus is and will be ensuring the vast wealth of the mineral resource within the Galilee Basin and ensuring that is sustainably managed for the benefit of future generations.

Less than five years ago the Queensland government declared—they made a declaration—that the Galilee Basin be a state development area to facilitate a coordinated approach to the opening up of that region. According to the Office of the Chief Economist, projects planned for the Galilee Basin have a combined value of over \$48 billion, and that would in turn support more than 18,000 jobs during construction. The jobs created in mining are typically very highly skilled, high-tech, high-paying jobs that support our local communities across Queensland. The Galilee Basin would generate more than \$50 billion in taxes, helping to fund schools, hospitals and public services not only across our state but also across this country.

Even if only one-quarter of the thermal coal capacity in the Galilee Basin were developed, the Queensland Resources Council estimates that the royalties paid to the government from that would be over approximately \$290 million each year. At today's rate, that could pay the annual salaries of over 4,000 teachers, police constables or registered nurses. The intent of the bill is to pull the shutters down on that potential. The focus of the Galilee Basin should be on strategic thinking and strategic planning for its sustainability as an economic powerhouse for the nation and for our future generations.

Isaac Regional Council is absolutely not ignorant to the discussion around climate change. The council recognises this region's important role in the development of a sustainable future and we are a champion for investment in the growing renewables sector. In the Isaac alone, there are two major solar farms under construction as we speak, a further seven approved projects in our system, and another project in the pipeline. In addition, we have accepted a state approved grant for one of Australia's largest wind farms in our Clarke Creek area, which is historically a rural area. Our region is absolutely demonstrating that a balanced approach between resources and renewables is not only possible; it is absolutely achievable, it is real and it is currently happening in this region. The council still supports further investment in renewables, in keeping with its vision to energise the world. We continue to drive for diversification of our economy and strive for a balanced energy mix across resources and renewables.

I ask: can all levels of government afford for the Galilee Basin not to open? The question this bill fails to fundamentally consider is: what future revenue streams are state and federal governments going to rely on instead of the billions and billions of dollars in future royalties and taxes when that coalmining disappears? What services are people in our cities and towns willing to go without? What infrastructure and what projects are people willing to cut if the revenue stream from the Galilee Basin is ignored or not accessed?

Further, the purpose of the bill does not take into account the global forecast demand for thermal coal which will be met by other sources if not the Galilee Basin. The International Energy Agency reports that coal will remain the single largest source of electricity through to 2040. Our resource sector has an absolute global reputation of extremely high quality coal that delivers reliable and affordable energy not only to this region but also to the state, the country and the world.

In conclusion, Isaac Regional Council recognises the region's important role in the development of a sustainable future. We will continue to support investment in the resource and renewables sectors, in keeping with our vision of energising the world. Together with my council colleagues, I welcome any questions. We are more than happy to answer them. I close by saying how passionate we are and how open-minded we are about the protection of our community and the benefit that the opening up of the Galilee Basin will be not only to the people who choose to live in this region but also to the people who choose to live in the state of Queensland and the people who choose to live in the country of Australia.

CHAIR: Moranbah and the Isaac Regional Council would be an administrative hub or one of the centres for servicing any Galilee Basin development; is that right?

Mayor Baker: That is correct. We would be one of the closest south-west of the Galilee Basin and we about Charters Towers, which is to the north of us.

CHAIR: One of the things we want to hear tonight are your views on the impact of this bill on your community.

Mayor Baker: If it does not proceed?

CHAIR: No. If this bill goes ahead, what would be the impact on your community?

Mayor Baker: If the bill goes ahead and the Galilee Basin is not opened, it will be an absolute travesty to the future of this region.

CHAIR: In what way do you mean a travesty for the future?

Mayor Baker: If it does not proceed, like I have quoted earlier, with the billions of dollars that are in the ground there, that financial benefit is going to have to come from somewhere. Every day we hear the commentary around essential services—police, nurses, doctors, teachers. Those positions have to be funded by a revenue stream. The Galilee Basin is an untapped revenue stream. It would be a brave level of government that chooses not to strategically, responsibly plan to open up that basin.

Mr WEIR: Thank you very much for that very comprehensive report. My first question is one that I have been asking everybody, as all the members of the committee know. Given the history of the Isaac Regional Council and the local councillors here with the coal industry over a long time, were you consulted, or was your advice sought, on the construction of this bill by the member for Maiwar?

Mayor Baker: I was not, no. We have a long history of having a voice on behalf of our community. We have an internal process where we follow bills that are lodged and submit where we can. No, there was no consultation with us.

Mr WEIR: We had the opportunity to visit a mine site this morning and saw firsthand the activity out there—a large number of employees and opportunities not only for earning the money but also for gaining skills. If mining was not in this area, where would you go for those skills to attract young people, or what do you think would be the impact on the young people of this region?

Mayor Baker: It is shutting down the future opportunities for the youth and the young adults in our immediate region. The vision of our council is directed to people who come to this region, and have done for decades, by way of opportunity and they find a reason to stay. The negative approach to this topic is denying any future growth or any future sustainability for this region and our regional neighbours.

Mr MADDEN: I would like to begin by thanking you and the other witnesses for coming in this evening. You will see from my nameplate that I am the member for Ipswich West. My part of Ipswich has a proud history of mining. We still have a mine at Ipswich West—Jeebropilly. I have two relatives who still work in the mining industry—a nephew and a niece. Mining is something that is very important to me. I am a former councillor—there are three former councillors sitting on this committee—and I am well aware of the interaction between local government and the mining industry, both in preparing for a mine to be established and after a mine is established. For the benefit of the committee, could you explain to the committee how local government interacts with the mining company prior to the establishment of the mine and the ongoing interaction between that company, the council and the community?

Mayor Baker: As I mentioned in my opening presentation, there are 26 active coalmines, so it is critically important for our council to have a good working relationship with all proponents that come into this region. It is critically important to us, as representatives of the community, that we understand the projects and we understand the environmental, social and economic benefits and negatives in bringing the projects to the surface, how they operate, what the construction impact is, what the operational impact is and how we can coexist. You cannot put a limit on how important that relationship is—the sustainability and the functionality of that relationship.

We have a long history with a lot of interaction with companies. With the bigger companies we work hard to have regular annual updates so that we can try to be in front of things that are going on. There are lots and lots of issues that come out of lots and lots of projects. The important point to labour is that there is nothing like a solid working relationship. It is critically important.

Mr MICKELBERG: Thank you for your comprehensive submission. I would like you to elaborate on the effect on small business should this bill be successful and mining in the Galilee Basin does not proceed, particularly in relation to providing certainty for small business and greater opportunity as you move forward.

Mayor Baker: It is pretty simple. It is removing an opportunity. It is removing opportunity for future generations. It is removing opportunity for small to medium businesses. It is also removing the opportunity for the supply chain that goes from pit to port. To be very clear, I am not just talking about the Isaac Regional Council geographical area. When the Isaac region and the resource sector is functioning well, our neighbours in Mackay and in Whitsunday benefit. There is a ripple effect from the upswing in the market and the sustainability and consistency of that market. To just ignore the billions of opportunities that are in the Galilee Basin is just negligent governing.

Mr MICKELBERG: Do you consider that there is a risk that currently viable small businesses will no longer be viable over time if this development does not go ahead?

Mayor Baker: It removes their opportunity. One thing we know in this part of the world is that not only our residents but also our business—small and medium businesses—are very resilient. The resource sector is cyclical. We are working hard to get sustainability and consistency across that. It is removing an opportunity. To a degree, you could predict that you are removing their viability.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you very much for being here and for the opportunity to visit Moranbah. At the outset I want to make it very clear not only to the representatives of the council but everyone else that I do very deeply respect, recognise and appreciate the role that the resources industry plays in our state economy now and in decades past. I want to preface my questions by making it clear that this bill is brought exclusively in the context of as-yet-undeveloped resources and only thermal coal as opposed to metallurgical coal. Beyond that, it is in the context of the impending impacts of climate change which have already been felt across many of the regions.

You mentioned in your introductory statement that the council is not ignorant of the discussion around climate change. I want to probe that a little. Can I take it from that that the council's position is premised on the best science available as presented through the IPCC's most recent work?

Mayor Baker: We are open-minded and we understand that there needs to be a responsible balance to the energy mix, so we are trying to get the message across through demonstrated approvals that are currently in our system that these industries can coexist.

Mr Stevenson: One of the things that we would never profess to be is experts on climate change. When you ask a question about international debate and international research, we are not going to say that we have the capacity, skill or knowledge to call it one way or the other. We do take the lead from both federal and state governments and their policy directions. At the end of the day, local governments are not necessarily responsible for those policy directions. It is quite clear that we will do our bit, both in adaptation and mitigation, but here we are talking about a proposition that sees the private sector and governments at all levels working towards an economic, social and environmental outcome. Our position is very, very clear: we will support responsible development. Our mayor articulated what we mean by responsible development—development that is fully compliant, fully cognisant and fully beneficial at a balanced level across all three pillars.

Mr BERKMAN: I am not going to verbal you by trying to summarise that, but it sounded from what you said initially, Mayor Baker, that, while you do not weigh into any particular debate, you do not dispute what the IPCC, as the leading international body on climate science, has published.

Mayor Baker: We have not looked into that in detail. I will validate what Gary has just said. We are not scientists; we are everyday people trying to do—

Mr BERKMAN: No, I do not expect you to be. I am sorry, I am not asking you to—I am sorry, I did not mean to interrupt.

Mayor Baker: We are just everyday people trying to do the best we can with what we believe we know in terms of representing the people who elected us to do a job. In terms of climate change, our position is that we understand the conversation and that it is there. We are not ignorant of it, so we are not turning our backs on that, but we are not specialists. We are not trained in that field. We are potentially sounding a bit defensive, and rightly so. I will defend the resource industry up and down, inside out, with every breath I take because it has given me my adult working life. I would like to challenge everybody to help them understand that when you drive your car, when you go home at night and turn on the lights and when you go to the bank to borrow money to build your house of steel, every day they go to work the miners in this community knowingly put their lives on the line for this country, this state and this community. They have provided benefits to this country and this state for decades, and that is something we are extremely proud of.

Mr BERKMAN: I appreciate that. I hope I have communicated that I genuinely appreciate the contribution of the resources industry. The most recent science tells us that if we are to meet the commitments of the Paris Agreement then thermal coal—again, I am talking just about thermal coal. This does not touch on metallurgical coal production or any other facet of the resource industry. If we are going to achieve those outcomes, which means the reef will survive—and if we fail to meet them the reef will be entirely lost—then we need to phase out thermal coal as a source of electricity production by 2050. That is what the science says. I am asking you to take that as a given. If that is the way society goes, what does a just transition look like for the Isaac region?

Mayor Baker: Can we accept that as a statement from the member?

CHAIR: Committee members here are well aware of the standing orders, and I would warn committee members against lengthy preambles to questions. I would caution all members here to ask direct questions and avoid lengthy preamble. I think we can take that as a statement.

Mayor Baker: I would make the point that we did not foresee that we would be drawn into forming or presenting an environmental opinion.

CHAIR: Gary, you mentioned that you are looking for state and federal leadership on the issue of climate change; is that correct?

Mr Stevenson: I think what I referred to was that we take direction from state and federal governments. We always look for leadership from those two spheres of government. We have our own capacity to lead locally, but my point was that we take direction from the legislation that is set, the policies that are set and the directions that are set.

Mr WEIR: This region is also well known for its farming and resources, so you would have a lot of experience as to how those two industries work together. Would you like to comment on that for the benefit of the committee? How have you found that experience over the years?

Mayor Baker: Over the years that I have been involved in local government, both as a councillor and as the mayor, I have witnessed some very positive coexisting. There could be a range of situations where there have been differences, but it is my view that over time they absolutely can coexist and coexist well.

Councillor Vea Vea: I fully support what our mayor has said. Over generations we have seen that those two can coexist, and with the boom in renewables we are watching a whole other industry alongside these two other long-term industries. I think what we have, too, is a government that has the capacity to set some really great guidelines in terms of rehabilitation. We have the ability and the will within our workforce and local governments to really bring the industry up to some really great standards that I think we have already seen through places like New Acland and other mines, which have already shown us that rehabilitation can be done well and it can be done to coexist with the agricultural sector as well.

CHAIR: Thank you all very much. We really appreciate your contribution. Thank you for being part of this process.

SMYTH, Mr Stephen, President, Mining and Energy Queensland Division, CFMMEU

CHAIR: Welcome, Stephen. I understand that you have driven some distance to be here today. The committee really appreciates you coming along to be part of this.

Mr Smyth: I want to thank the committee for asking the Queensland district branch of the Mining and Energy Division of the CFMMEU to appear here today to speak on behalf of our members, their families and the communities. I am a third-generation coalminer myself. In fact, we belong to a broader union movement, the CFMMEU, which has nearly 150,000 members across this country. CFMMEU Mining and Energy Queensland District is the principal union of coalmining and has supported workers, families and communities for over 110 years across Queensland. We represent these workers through direct union membership and indirectly by the work our union does in Queensland. The CFMMEU contributes to local communities both directly, through donations, and indirectly, by workers giving endless hours of their time at local football clubs, schools and other community related events. A monetary value cannot be put on it, but over the years it would amount to millions of dollars.

The CFMMEU does not support the proposed bill. We believe that it will rob Queenslanders of jobs and economic benefits and would not assist global efforts to address climate change. We believe that the bill to ban thermal coal mining in the Galilee Basin is irresponsible grandstanding. Coal is Australia's biggest export earner, but the coal industry is the most important industry in Queensland—in particular, regional Queensland—for jobs and opportunities.

Bear with me: some big numbers have probably been circulated over the last few days. As we know, the resources industry contributed \$62.9 billion to the Queensland economy. That really represents one in eight jobs and one in five dollars. Further, the sector pays \$4.3 billion in royalty taxes. Mining companies are making bumper profits and the Queensland government is reaping the benefits, which all Queenslanders enjoy through education and health infrastructure and social services across the state. There is no alternative to the value that the coalmining industry delivers across the state. Queenslanders want good, secure, well-paying jobs. Coalmining provides jobs that are unmatched in terms of pay and conditions by any other industry in regional areas.

The passage of the bill would be a blow to regional Queensland, ruling out thousands of potential new jobs that will sustain communities over the coming decades. Coalmining projects in the Galilee Basin should have neither a blanket ban nor a blanket cheque. Any mining project proposed for the Galilee Basin should be assessed on its merits and must be economically viable. They have to meet the strictest environmental requirements, but mining development applications should not have additional strings attached when it appears an approval is close to sign-off. Approvals should be employed in a transparent and consistent way to give communities and the industry some certainty about the future.

The CFMMEU has been active in discussions around addressing climate change for over 25 years. We have advocated for effective policies to reduce emissions across the economy whilst supporting resources jobs and communities. The union continues to be involved in various committees and discussions on this matter. We stand by our position. Climate change is a global challenge and cannot be managed in isolation. The global framework for addressing climate change, underpinned by the Paris Agreement, was based on tonnes of emissions produced, not tonnes of coal produced. It is based on each country taking responsibility for the emissions it produces. On that basis, there is nothing to stop Australian thermal coal customers from simply going elsewhere and purchasing and burning lower grade coal, resulting in worse outcomes for global emissions.

The fact is that the global demand for coal is strong and Australian coal exports are still growing. In a scenario modelled by the International Energy Agency, coal is forecast to provide about 40 per cent of total power generation in the Asia-Pacific region by the year 2040. If we want a global framework for addressing climate change, it is up to other countries to reduce demand for our coal within their strategies for energy production and emissions reduction if they wish. This may happen over time, but it is not up to us to force other countries to stop buying our coal. We need to address climate change by advancing technology, greater energy efficiency and supplying high-quality, low-emission resources that displace high-emission products. That is what Australian coal can deliver. Prohibiting thermal coal mining in the Galilee Basin would hurt Queensland jobs and would not assist in the global challenge to address climate change. The CFMMEU does not support the bill and encourages the committee to recommend that the bill not be passed.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Stephen. One of the things that I am keen to hear about is the impact on community. What is the role of the mining industry in skilling locals? Obviously it provides jobs, but how crucial is the industry in providing a highly skilled and technologically advanced pathway?

Mr Smyth: It certainly is crucial. I think sometimes people do not understand that an operator at a coalmine is not just an operator; they are highly skilled and well-trained individuals. Along with experience obviously comes more skills. People sometimes simply pigeonhole us and say 'they're just an operator who operates a truck' or they're a person who works underground'. These people are highly skilled, they love their work and some see it as a career. It is actually a career; it is not something that you just take up for the sake of it. Certainly from my perspective, in my 32 years in the industry, people wear being a coalminer as a badge of honour.

CHAIR: In the submission you talk about alternative ways to minimise the impact of climate change. Do you want to expand a little on that?

Mr Smyth: Again, I will place on the record that I am neither a scientist nor an expert on climate change. Working for the organisation that I do, we have had a position in the areas of climate change and just transition for a period of years. That is led by our general president, Tony Maher. Certainly we are across the issues enough to talk about what should be happening. We talk about money spent by industry on other technologies. Look at carbon capture and also look at the other ways the impact of coal can be reduced. What is a bit unfair in my view is that coal gets targeted because it is an easy target in the sense that when the industry is doing well industry should be spending money, and so should government, on doing more to advance technology change and provide other opportunities.

CHAIR: One of the effects of the bill that I have seen is the CFMMEU working with the Queensland Resources Council. That must have been a bit of an experience for both sides.

Mr Smyth: Certainly it is. They are normally our natural enemy. Again, we align on matters that are important to us, which is the future of mining for our members, the families and the communities that we represent. Yes, it has been an interesting discussion.

Mr WEIR: As the union with the most members involved in this industry, were you consulted or asked for your input in the development of this bill?

Mr Smyth: No.

Mr WEIR: You commented about the guidelines and the processes that already exist for the approval of coalmining or for new mines. Do you believe that that is different in this case?

Mr Smyth: Yes, I believe it has been. I believe there have been a number of approval processes that have gone along and then, when the bar looked like it was going to be reached, the bar was moved. That is my opinion. I have seen a fair lot of scrutiny clearly put on the Carmichael coal or the Adani project. All we are saying is that there should be a level playing field and a project should be judged on the project, not on what people may think or have a personal view on. I know that throughout this I have seen the bar get moved.

Mr WEIR: We visited a mine this morning. One thing that struck me was the number of females working in that mine. I grew up in a country town. If there was one thing that town was short of, it was females. That was great to see. Is that something that your union encourages and wants to see growing through this resource industry?

Mr Smyth: We certainly do. We certainly support diversity. A lot of our members are female. In fact, we have the largest number of female members in the mining industry and the power generators. Certainly we support and believe it is good for the industry and it is good for our communities.

Mr WEIR: Yes, it is—very much so.

Mr MADDEN: I am impressed to hear a submission on a bill before parliament from one of our more prominent unions. I am also pleased to see you working with the Queensland Resources Council on this issue. I can completely understand why you are in harmony with regard to your submissions. I have some basic questions about the numbers. About what percentage of workers in the mining industry in Queensland does the CFMMEU represent?

Mr Smyth: We have coverage for all workers in the industry. Obviously one of the issues in the mining industry is the increase in labour hire, so it varies. Certainly with the permanent workforce, we would be in the 50, 60, 70 per cent. With labour hire it is a bit less, but obviously that is because of the transient nature of the work they are in. Certainly it does not stop us representing them in every way, shape and form.

Mr MADDEN: About how many people do we have actually working in the mining industry in Queensland at the moment, as a ballpark figure?

Mr Smyth: About 38,000.

Mr MADDEN: In your submission you say that the industry created over 10,000 jobs just in the past year.

Mr Smyth: Yes. I would say that when the downturn came nearly 12,000 jobs were lost. I live in Mackay. You see the impact of when the economy turns down. Mayor Anne Baker talked about the mining region being the lifeblood of communities on the coast such as Mackay, Rockhampton and Townsville. Through the figures that we have, I know that certainly the numbers have increased. You see them increase each and every day. There are not enough people around to take on the roles.

Mr MADDEN: Thanks again for coming in tonight. I would like to thank the other witnesses for coming in tonight, too.

Mr MICKELBERG: I want to follow up on the question from the member for Condamine. You talked about additional strings being attached. I take it that you are referring to the current proposals in the Galilee Basin?

Mr Smyth: Yes, I am.

Mr MICKELBERG: Do you think the goalposts have shifted?

Mr Smyth: I believe they have, because it appears to me that they certainly look like they get to a hurdle. We are all about them meeting their requirements, but there has to be a level playing field. It seems that the goalposts get moved when they seem close to getting to the try line.

Mr MICKELBERG: Why do you think that is?

Mr Smyth: Personally, I think people's guts are in knots about this. Some people have made a decision or obviously have a personal view on what they think about the mine or mining in general. Obviously, it may play on their conscience. I cannot speak for them, but that is an observation that I make in the role that I am in.

Mr MICKELBERG: Last week we heard from Deputy Premier Jackie Trad, who said that coal workers should retrain into new industries as the world moves away from thermal coal. I think those were her words. What is your view on that sentiment?

Mr Smyth: Her comments were reckless, inappropriate and out of line, and not everyone is going to have a beard and live in Mackay, Middlemount or Moranbah.

CHAIR: You have been waiting all hearing for that, haven't you?

Mr BERKMAN: The same premise applies.

Mr Smyth: Yes, mate; not a problem.

Mr BERKMAN: I do very much appreciate the role that the resource industry plays. I will skip the long preamble and get straight to the nub of the question that I sought to ask before. If we are going to reach zero thermal coal electricity production by 2050, as proposed by the IPCC, what does that look like in terms of a just transition for workers in thermal coal mines?

Mr Smyth: That is a really good question actually, because the words 'just transition' are thrown around very loosely. To me, just transition is about real transition. I do not believe anyone has their head around what just transition looks like. Recently—in October last year—I came back from India, where I spent three days with all of the coalmining unions from around the world. I can tell you that just transition is not working in their countries. Just transition for people in countries such as that, which already have the best high-paying jobs—there is no alternative. That is one of the issues that people in government, the industry and the general public need to come to terms with.

The question I have is this: I would like to know what the members I represent in places such as Moranbah, Tieri or Middlemount are going to 'just transition' into. We work for a long time to get our conditions and entitlements to where they are at. I cannot see an industry coming in to replace the work that my members currently do—or their children. It is an interesting discussion in itself as to what 'just transition' actually means, because I do not think anyone has their head around that.

Again, without wanting to stir the pot, personally I have seen some issues with the renewables sector in Queensland, particularly with the solar farms. They do not create the jobs that they promised to create. There is something in the renewables sector as well with the solar farms that I would like to see. Mines have to put in their EAP that they have to repair the land and rehabilitate. In the renewables sector, I am still to see where that has to happen with solar panels or windmills or whatever is done. That is a question in return. I know that you are here to ask me questions, but it is a question that I always think about and that gets posed to me, about how that would actually work. It is an overall picture. I know that you asked about just transition and I went on a bit about it, but there are some questions that we have to grasp ourselves as well.

Mr BERKMAN: That is very fair. If I can have the chair's indulgence?

CHAIR: Yes, you can ask another question.

Mr BERKMAN: There was an announcement late last year from the government about the creation of a just transition group and an advisory committee. With you or the CFMMEU more broadly, what steps have been taken in that process so far?

Mr Smyth: I was contacted about two weeks ago about wanting to catch up with that just transition group to talk about matters. We actually were not involved initially. Other unions were involved in that process. Over the past few weeks we have finally been contacted about that. Like with any panel or any discussions, we are happy to be involved in that, because those are the questions that we want to pose back in return. I think people should not lose sight of the fact that we have the youngest fleet of power stations in the state. Clearly thermal coal is important to us, not only for our power generation and other industries but also from an export perspective. We welcome the opportunity to participate in the just transition discussions.

Mr BERKMAN: We have heard evidence about the flow-on effects on other mines of the opening up of the Galilee. You would be familiar with Wood Mackenzie as very reputable analysts. They have done reporting that shows that competition from Galilee coalmines would have a very real impact on coal prices and put at risk existing jobs in thermal coal mines. What is your view on that? How does the CFMMEU respond to those risks to the existing jobs of members?

Mr Smyth: I have not read the report, but from our perspective I would question it. If, particularly in South-East Asia, there is a demand of around three to four per cent a year for coal, there will be a requirement for additional coal to be put into the market. Most of the producers of the thermal coal product in Queensland are going gangbusters now. To me, it is about new opportunities and it is about us providing what we see as our best quality thermal coal into those markets, because if we do not then clearly the likes of South Africa, Indonesia and the US will. It is a challenge. Every day is a challenge. The industry could change tomorrow. The price of coal could drop. We have to be up for that challenge, be flexible and be able to work within it.

Mr MICKELBERG: I probably should have asked this question of the mayor also, but I will ask Mr Smyth. Obviously there is an ideological debate here with respect to climate change, which is the justification for this bill. Setting that aside, do you think as a response to that problem this bill places an unfair burden on the coal industry, coal workers and communities in this region as opposed to the rest of the community more broadly?

Mr Smyth: It certainly does. I will be up-front and honest here: I see this proposed bill as the start of a spread potentially with thermal coal. It goes from the Galilee to the Bowen Basin and then extends. That is my opinion. I know that the bill is about the Galilee. Again, I am proud of my industry and I will fight for it. I see that. From our perspective, people do not understand regional Queensland unless they live here. It is different from any other part of the country and it is so important to our economy and to our people.

Mr MICKELBERG: I place on the record that I really appreciate the frankness and constructive answers you have given tonight. Thank you.

Mr Smyth: No worries.

Mr MADDEN: Mr Smyth, earlier the chair mentioned the increasing number of female workers in the mining industry. When we visited the Poitrel Mine today they talked about the increasing numbers of apprentices they are taking on and you mentioned the influence of job hire companies. Can you give us an idea of the changes you are seeing with regard to the employment practices of the mining industry?

Mr Smyth: Clearly one of the major changes is the move away from employment to labour hire and casual employment. It was really good when the companies used to employ the apprentices in-house. A number of the companies now will use a third party. We are all for apprentices and diversity, but the days of old where they would employ them in-house and have them working under their banner have changed as well, where they have third parties like MRAEL and others that are employing them. The industry has certainly changed and with any of these bills we welcome these mines, but they have to be good, secure, well-paying jobs and offer real opportunity for workers.

Mr BERKMAN: I refer to your submission. There is reference in there—and you mentioned these in your introductory statement—to forecasts from the IEA which I will rephrase as scenarios, because they do modelling on scenarios rather than forecasts of what they expect. You said that outside the IEA central scenario industry opponents refer to the IEA's sustainable development scenario. Is it your view that if you look to the sustainable development scenario you are inherently opposed to industry?

Mr Smyth: No.

Mr BERKMAN: No? Okay.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Maiwar. Thank you very much, Stephen, for once again being part of this today. The time for this session has expired.

Mr Smyth: Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR: We are now going into—and this is something we usually do not do at committee hearings—an open mic session. As I said, we want to hear your stories and hear from people out here today. We will give you about three minutes each. If you want to have a say, go over and talk to Jacqui because we need to get your details for the record. Mike Brunner is first on the list, and I am not surprised. Remember: just three minutes, Mike.

BRUNKER, Mr Mike, Private capacity

Mr Brunker: Thank you, Mr Chair. I am opposed to this bill. I am the councillor for division 6 of the Whitsunday Regional Council. I am a third-generation coalminer, like Steve. I left the mines in 1990. I did my apprenticeship. I then ran for local government in 1994. I was elected as mayor in 1997 and spent 20 years as mayor of the Bowen and Whitsunday regional councils. In that 20 years I have spent most of my working life as a mayor harassing state parliamentarians and premiers for jobs. I think we were successful given the fact that Beattie gave up in the long run and gave us the state development area in Bowen. We saw that as the jewel in the crown for us to be able to create some jobs at Abbot Point and to have some industry factories to complement the missing rail link. If you remember the 70 ships that used to sit outside of Mackay and have a major effect on our economy, we lobbied like Christ and got that happening.

I have seen power stations close in Collinsville. I have seen railways close. We lost over 2,000 jobs in the nineties. When you compare that to when Stockton happened in Newcastle and they lost 2,000 jobs in Newcastle, the state government and federal government threw a \$25 million rescue package at them. We squeezed \$10 million out of Peter Beattie and a state development area, and at that time we were quite thankful. We saw the Galilee Basin as a huge opportunity for Bowen and Collinsville because we are struggling. We are the fifth worst economy in the state for people buying houses and in the worst 10 or 15 in the nation in terms of real estate in Bowen, and the same in Collinsville.

You talk about the solar farms. I had a bit to do with the solar farms in the last few years when we were shuttling 250 to 300 Bulgarians out to Collinsville to work on those solar farms, and the other solar farm had a heap of backpackers. We were used to backpackers in the horticultural industry, which is a good industry for Bowen, but never before have we seen backpackers in the solar industry. That boom that we had in Collinsville is gone—completely gone. The main street is back to the old Collinsville and we are very sad for that, because all of the solar farm workers are gone and we just have coalminers.

I cannot believe that we are still talking about the Galilee Basin, because it was about eight years ago when I went out there and Gina Rinehart dug her first pit out there. I was out there with Stirling Hinchliffe and the Liberal Party cabinet and the National Party cabinet and senators when she dug her first test pit and that coal was approved to go off. I still think it is a bit of a fallacy that we are still talking about Adani being the first one out in the Galilee Basin. There has already been coal developed out there, so I do not know what has happened there.

Before you ask your questions about transition, I support transition as well. I probably support 50 per cent renewables, but what you as a parliamentary inquiry should be sitting here looking into is carbon capture and whether Healy coal-fired power stations are a thing of the future. You have rocks in your head if you think you are going to stop the coal industry in Queensland and push it over, as my comrade Stephen Smyth said, to Indonesia and Russia, where they burn stuff that is equivalent to cow pats and think we are doing a great job, because this is just the start of it.

I have read the Australian coal foundation business plan on how to shut down the coal industry and how to shut down coalmines, and that is just one of your mob that want to do that and there is a lot more. Talk about dredging. Talk about the Caley Valley Wetlands. Talk about the rail lines. I am not a fool, and that is why we are so passionate about the fact that this is just the start if we close this down. It is important to the nation's economy, it is important to Moranbah and Bowen's economy and I certainly support the going ahead of the Galilee Basin. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mike. Well done.

GRIFFITHS, Mr Aaron, Private capacity

Mr Griffiths: Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, including the member for Maiwar as a visitor. I was going to talk about the impacts from my personal perspective, but the member for Maiwar in his questions brought up a very good topic of fair and just transition. A fair and just transition sounds good on paper, but when you put in your bill that we are going to lock up a development area in a state economy or an economy as a whole you basically chop off the rudder despite your captain. I have seen what happens when you just cut off your rudder despite your captain. When I first moved to Moranbah it was in boom. The mining area was in boom. People were happy. Moranbah was thriving. Businesses were thriving and people were happy to come here.

However, around Queensland there is mass unemployment in major centres such as Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane and the surrounding areas. The then government, a Labor government, decided to bring in a policy of fair transition to allow coalmines to fly their workers exclusively from those three ports to essentially assist the unemployment rates in those high-value areas. I am not against that. We are Queenslanders—all of us. We are Australians as well and we are part of the global community. However, that cut off and damaged the Moranbah community. It damaged jobs. It damaged local businesses. It damaged people who had invested in this area with dreams and hopes. They were mums and dads. They were your electricians and so on.

When I see a bill that says we are going to lock up vast resources and that it is not going to create any damage whatsoever, I am extremely sceptical—and I am not a very big sceptic. I support the fact that we have to do something about climate change. We have to look at it, but a fair and just transition requires leadership from all. It requires a step-by-step approach. It does not require a knee-jerk reaction that says, 'Hey, this area's bad. Let's shut it down,' because if we do not meet our Paris Agreement the next industry will go. What is the next industry that some people have said needs to go? Agriculture. The agriculture industry in our backyard is mainly cows—cattle—sheep and animals in general. One of the things that is a by-product of that is methane. One of the things that came out of the scientific reports is that we also have to combat methane, so what next? Are we going to shut down the number of cows that can be purchased or the number of cows that can be grazed? That would mean that another industry is gone.

This may not seem like much to people in big cities where they have towers of steel and glass—all brought to you thanks to thermal coal. I am pointing to the member for Maiwar because he is the sponsor of this bill, and I believe you are in the Indooroopilly area. I go down there. My grandmother and my family come from Salisbury and around that area. I will end by asking: is that what is going to happen? Are we then going to lock Brisbane up and say, 'No more development'? These are things that we have to ask and we have to have a step-by-step, just transition. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Aaron.

TUBMAN, Ms Wendy, Private capacity

Ms Tubman: Thank you very much for this opportunity, gentlemen. In opening proceedings this evening, Mr Chair, you sought comments on the economic and social impact of Mr Berkman's bill. I noticed that you did not mention the environment, but people have talked to you about it because we recognise that without an environment there is no economy and there is no society. That is what is important and that is why the IPCC report is so very important. They have made it very clear that we are on the brink of catastrophic climate change. It is not really a case, with all due respect to the mayor, who spoke earlier, of balancing anymore between coal and renewables. We are so far out of balance that we have to take drastic action, and that means, as the IPCC has said, no new coal.

There are a couple of other points that I would like to make. A lot of the discussion has been about jobs. I come from Townsville. There are 64,000 jobs associated with the reef. That is not my number; that is the number from Deloitte Access Economics. If we lose the reef, we lose 64,000 jobs. We have to look at the wider impacts. It is not just jobs in the mining industry; it is all the jobs that will be lost if we do have catastrophic climate change. At this point I would like to seek leave to table—and I am not sure whether I can; I cannot, so I will refer to it—a full-page advertisement that appeared in the *Courier-Mail* last Saturday which is signed by 56 farmers in the region. They are against, first of all, Adani but against Adani as the opener for the Galilee Basin. They recognise the need to take much stronger control of our water and they fear that with the cumulative impact that would occur with all the additional mines, let alone Adani, there would be severe threats to their water.

The third point I would like to make is that it does come back to economics, because I actually trained as an economist. Mr Madden, I have seen you quoted; I think it was in the *Townsville Bulletin*, but I will not swear to that. You said that the bill could cost Queensland \$660 million in compensation if it passes. In contrast to that, the recent floods in Townsville are estimated to have cost \$1.5 billion. The recent storms in Brisbane cost \$1.1 billion. The more climate change, the more coal, the more carbon dioxide, the more catastrophic weather events we will experience and the more compensation will be paid. We have to look at all those economic costs. I put to you as an economist that sunk cost is sunk cost; you do not throw good money after bad. If we have made a mistake putting all our money behind coal, stop doing it now before it is too late.

CHAIR: We will accept that paper to be tabled.

CHANT, Mr Chris, Private capacity

Mr Chant: Good afternoon. Thanks for the opportunity. My comments are basically in line with the previous witness statements from Isaac Regional Council. They talked about responsibility, sustainability and things like that. I am referring to genuine past issues that we have outlined in previous submissions regarding coalmines. We have made clear many thoughts talking about growth, health, hospitals, doctors, schools and waterways including the underground, dust mitigation and commutative dust. That was all primarily directed around Moranbah. Understandably, the Galilee Basin is generally not going to throw dust in Moranbah. I just want to provide you with my thoughts that the council and the community and all the rest in past have proven that they are responsible. They are trying to maintain sustainability and they are genuinely worrying about environmental factors, particularly locals. The international thing is probably a bit big for us. If that is a challenge in the smaller event, I am sure we could meet those challenges and move on with trying to find ways around it.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Chris.

SMITH, Mr Bevan, Private capacity

CHAIR: Is this your young fellow here today?

Mr Smith: Yes, they are both mine.

CHAIR: That is good. He will be able to say that he saw his dad sitting before a parliamentary inquiry.

Mr Smith: I am wondering what your plans are for these towns if you do lock this joint up. Do you have an idea where we are going to go and work?

CHAIR: We will take that as a comment. One of the things we are looking for is for you to give us your experience of living here, what the mining industry means to you, what you have got out of it and what it means to your family as well. If it was locked up, what would happen? We are keen to hear from you what you think about these issues.

Mr Smith: I have been working in coal for 12 years. I was a Colorbond roofer in Canberra and I came up here to be an underground coalminer. I have done 10 years underground and two years on the surface as well. It is everything to me. This is my dream job. It pays well. I will not get another job that pays like this to support my family because I am not educated. I am good with my hands. I am not good at reading.

If you take the industry out of this place it is going to end up like that joint in South Australia where they stopped mining asbestos and now it is just a town with nothing. Asbestos was bad; there is no doubt about that. However, there is nothing going on down there now. Those jobs were not replaced; those people were out on their arse with nothing. The same will happen here.

The coalmining industry here supports jobs all the way to Brisbane and Cairns from this area. If you go and sit down at that rest area near the Isaac River bridge you will probably see 30 big, wide loads go through every day; they come from Mackay—all the heavy industrial welding that this region supports. All those jobs will go. In the downturn it was bloody horrible. There was no work. I think I had 12 weeks between jobs; I could not find work at all. I just struggled and maxed out credit cards until I could find another job. I lived in Townsville at the time and I could not even get a job in Townsville.

If you take the industry out of here, I do not know how many people just in Isaac will be affected, but then there are also people in Emerald, Middlemount and Tieri who all move to chase work up north as well. As work dries up down here, there will be thousands and thousands of people with no job to go to. Nothing in your bill shows plans for where people are going to work. I do not want to work in the city. I live in a town with no traffic lights and I think it is bloody great.

CHAIR: Thanks very much indeed.

McCALLUM, Mr Peter, Private capacity

Mr McCallum: Thank you for hearing me. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on today and also acknowledge the history of the coal industry in Queensland as a driving force of economic growth in the state and in my personal history. I was working in the coal industry until about 2014, when the downturn arrived and I lost my job like a lot of people did. I was not directly employed in a mine, but I was associated with it.

Tonight I have heard a lot of people talking about not having any idea of anything that can happen other than coal. When I started work as a teenager in an office I remember being offered an ashtray. I was asked what size I wanted. I notice tonight that no-one here has an ashtray; we have moved on from that. The world changes. We can also change the way that we produce energy and we can produce energy that can be stored in the form of water in gravity or we can produce it in the form of hydrogen that could be exported to the world. Queensland has some great export potential there because we are the Sunshine State; we can capture the sun and turn that into hydrogen energy that could be a new resource for the world.

In Mackay, where I live, when I switch on the lights at night, 30 per cent of that power is coming from renewable energy that is generated by the local sugarmill. If the state government was able to provide the sugar industry with support then they could put high-efficiency boilers in all of the 17 mills in Queensland and produce energy that is renewable year round and power the entire state.

Climate change is coming. We know that the Queensland government has a policy of zero net emissions by 2050. It is not going to do that alone; the world is going to move in that direction. Regardless of whether we open a new coal industry or new mines—whatever—eventually there will be no demand for thermal coal.

The Office of the Chief Economist in the federal government put out a report last year, a forecast on the thermal coal industry. They predict that over the next 18 months there will be a two per cent decline globally in demand for coal, especially as a result of Chinese demand declining, which will lead to a 30 per cent decline in coal prices. It is likely to drop to around \$75 a tonne from the peak of about \$105 recently.

The sensitivity of the coal economy is something that needs to be considered before opening up new coalmines. Adani alone will add about two per cent to the world's coal supply. If we see a 30 per cent reduction in coal prices as a result of a two per cent decrease in demand, adding two per cent into that world supply is not going to help keep the coal prices high. The reason everyone, like me, lost their job back in 2014 was not because we stopped producing coal; there has never been any decline in the volume of coal that has come out of Queensland. What we have seen is the prices fluctuate. As soon as the prices drop, coal companies sack workers. They do not care about workers; all they care about is profits. When they want to increase profits in a declining market, they get rid of the workforce.

The opening up of the Galilee Basin provides false hope to people. It is also a crazy economic proposal to do that. What we have seen recently—and even in this committee tonight we have heard that the government is shifting the goalposts on Adani as one example of a coalmine in that area. The way I see it is that Adani have not done the work to get the ball across the line to prove that they are going to build this mine in an environmentally and scientifically acceptable manner.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Peter.

MAWSON, Mr Dave, Private capacity

Mr Mawson: I am passionately against this bill. I am a bit different to most of the blokes here; I am a first-generation Australian. This bill will attack my entire family. I have a daughter who has just started her job courtesy of the mining industry, and my young fellow is going through school at the moment and is hoping to be an apprentice when he comes out. We keep saying that the coal industry is at fault here. When you come in over the top of Anne, our mayor, saying that if we want to have a reef we have to shut down coal, what is actually killing the reef? One day we are blaming the cows and the methane and the next day it is the canefarmers and the fossil fuels. This month coalmines are copping the blame. It seems to us, the guys at the face, that the Greens are going to attack coal; they are going to use the reef as a clutch to attack coal.

The member for Buderim asked how the downturn or not having coal affected small business. I can tell him that when I moved to this town—after promising my wife that as long as my arse is pointed to the ground I never would, and we have been here for seven years—there was not an empty business. People were conducting businesses out of their houses because they could not get a shop. If you walk up the street now, there are empty houses and businesses that have shut down. That is how it affects small business. If the coal industry goes, there are a lot of Australian families and a lot of businesses that just will not be around.

You asked the question twice: was the council or was my union involved in the process? The question should be: why were they not involved? The answer is that they do not want to hear what we have to say; they do not want to hear how it affects people here or the effect it will have on the future of Queensland. You talk about Ipswich and you have one coalmine down there. We all know the economic troubles you have had down there with unemployment. Imagine what one or maybe two more mines hypothetically would do for their area.

Everybody benefits from coal. We have clean coal technologies. If we have not, we need to invest more in them, but we cannot get rid of coal. One of the ladies raised the issue about climate change. The government will not have the money to help anybody if we do not have coal to put money in the coffers. I cannot see how your bill is going to save the reef or improve the world. We have to improve the technology, but we do not have to destroy the industry.

CHAIR: Thanks very much. I have to apologise to everyone. We only have room for one more and that is Kim Sinclair.

SINCLAIR, Ms Kim, Private capacity

Ms Sinclair: Good evening. Thank you for allowing me to speak. Thank you very much for travelling all the way to Moranbah. It is always good to have a government panel come up and listen to us. I have heard you ask questions about community quite a number of times tonight, so I thought I would just give you a perspective of what community means for me in a mining town.

I am a female coalmine worker. I will give you the heads-up on that. I have worked in the coalmining industry for close to 10 years now. I am also a wife and mother to two young daughters. I have lost family members in this close-knit community. The idea of having an industry decline or ripped away by a bill is concerning. I understand that the bill is speaking to the Galilee Basin. I understand that it is talking to thermal coal at this stage. It concerns me when I read a bill like this. I have heard you speak several times about 'just transition'. Mr Berkman, what does 'just transition' actually mean to you? What does 'just transition' actually look like to you? Am I allowed to ask that?

CHAIR: No, you can question afterwards. We will take that as a statement. Please keep going.

Ms Sinclair: The essence of this bill is to blanket ban and then rip away existing operations—remove existing coal leases or anything that overlaps—

CHAIR: Please keep going. We will take this is a statement.

Ms Sinclair: What it means to me when I read something like that that is coming through parliament that talks about 'just transition' is that it is not first and foremost in your mind. I understand the climate. I heard your interview today, Mr Berkman. You are very passionate about it. It is your life's work. You have dedicated most of your life to this, I think you said in your interview. I understand that, but it is really hard for communities like ours out here that have built our lives around these towns to read something like this.

This proposal to stop coalmining creates fear in the hearts and minds of the people who live out here, especially after going through a downturn like we did. We are actually starting to see the community rise up and we are getting a lot more people coming through. I took my daughter to kindy the other morning and I noticed how many more families are in town. My little girls gets the opportunity to have more friends. I have the opportunity to have my own friends here in town.

We have committed our lives to this town and to the industry as well. I am very proud to call myself a coalminer. I have the skills that I have gained over the last 10 years. I am very proud to have those skills. I am not a truck driver; I am an operator, and a damn good one. It scares me the thought that we would have to find somewhere else to go, somewhere else to live because we would lose our home, we would lose the opportunity to have our children in school here and we could possibly also lose the opportunity to keep our family together.

At the end of day, fly-in fly-out is very real for the regions. If we wanted to stay together we would have to look at that genuine option. It scares the living daylights out of me, as it does my girlfriends in Emerald. They were waiting for this basin to open up. There was so much opportunity. There were people that I had known who moved away but are waiting to come back.

I see the missed opportunity. I understand climate change. I am very aware and agree with the 50 per cent renewables, but I do not believe in blanket banning things. I do not believe in creating a piece of legislation that completely wipes out the ability for growth within a regional area without due consideration.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Kim. The time for this session has expired. That concludes this hearing. Thank you very much to all the witnesses who participated tonight. Thank you to our Hansard reporter and thank you, Jacqui. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary web page in due course. I declare this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018 closed.

The committee adjourned at 7.34 pm.