

EASTERN GOLDFIELDS MINERS MEMORIAL

Statement

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral) [10.02 pm]: On Saturday, 3 March in Kalgoorlie–Boulder I was very pleased to attend the fourth anniversary of the Eastern Goldfields Miners Memorial. Joining me at the event, which was held at the miners’ memorial in front of the Museum of the Goldfields on Hannan Street, was the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Hon Bill Johnston, and Madam President. Also attending was City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder mayor, John Bowler, and members of the community. The prayers for the day were led by Lieutenant Gavin Jones from the Salvation Army in Kalgoorlie. I have visited the memorial a few times, and each time it makes me think about and dwell on our nation’s history. It is hard not to, looking back over the years since the war, particularly right back to 1940 and 1950, and seeing many, many names enshrined on the memorial—workers who lost their lives. It is not the good parts of our history, but instead the men and women we let down who did not come home from work due to workplace incidents.

We started by listening to the very talented Goldfields Brass Band, which played the national anthem. We also raised the Boulder flag, which has been raised throughout history whenever a miner has been killed. After the speeches were given, it was a very proud moment for the region when the mayor and minister unveiled the 2017 section of the memorial. I am proud to say that in 2017 there have been zero deaths in the region in the mining industry. They also added names that had been missed over time, and the MC spoke to the crowd and praised the work of local historian Moya Sharp, who has worked very, very hard to ensure that all men and women who have lost their lives on the job in the mining industry are remembered. In closing, members of the public were invited to place sprigs of rosemary on the names of their loved ones on the wall. It was quite a powerful moment to see people go up and spread rosemary all across the memorial.

Members of this place may be aware that I have a passion for workplace safety. It is events such as the memorial that make me feel as though the tide is turning. The community has respected the history of the goldfields. It is not something to be proud of, but we must remember and pay our respects to these workers. I pass on a huge thankyou to the organisers of the event; to you, Madam President, for attending; and to the minister.

I will leave members today with a poem that they may have heard before. This was read out at the event by Ken Ball. It was written by Don Merrell. After hearing this poem, I believe every worker in all industries should listen to it and ask themselves whether they will choose to look the other way.

I Chose To Look The Other Way

I could have saved a life that day,
But I chose to look the other way.
It wasn’t that I didn’t care;
I had the time, and I was there.

But I didn’t want to seem a fool,
Or argue over a safety rule.
I knew he’d done the job before;
If I spoke up he might get sore.

The chances didn’t seem that bad;
I’d done the same, he knew I had.
So I shook my head and walked on by;
He knew the risks as well as I.

He took the chance, I closed an eye;
And with that act, I let him die.
I could have saved a life that day,
But I chose to look the other way.

Now every time I see his wife,
I know I could have saved his life.
That guilt is something I must bear;
But it isn’t something you need share.

If you see a risk that others take
That puts their health or life at stake,
The question asked or thing you say;
Could help them live another day.

If you see a risk and walk away,
Then hope you never have to say,

“I could have saved a life that day,
But I chose to look the other way.”