

COAL MINERS' WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL 2004

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr M.P. Murray on behalf of Mr C.M. Brown (Minister for State Development), and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the member.

Second Reading

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie) [12.28 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The principal Act that the Bill proposes to amend is the Coal Miners' Welfare Act 1947. The Act establishes a welfare fund and provides for a board to administer the fund. The board and the fund are resourced by a levy on the tonnage of coal produced. The funds are used to provide amenities and for the improvement of the physical, cultural and social wellbeing of coalminers.

In October 2002, a review of the board and Act was carried out in response to the report of the Machinery of Government Taskforce. There was majority support for the recommendations of the review, and for the proposed amendments to implement those recommendations. The Bill proposes a package of essentially straightforward but important amendments to the Coal Miners' Welfare Act 1947. The significant changes in the amendment package include increasing the level of penalties for breaches of the Act and non-payment to the fund; improving the board's appointment process; and, amending the definition of "coal miner" in the Act to include persons who work for hire or reward in the coalmining industry.

Other amendments in the Bill streamline procedures for both the coal mining industry and the board, as follows -

to provide for deputy and temporary members of the Coal Miners' Welfare Board;

to allow for the vice president of each of the nominated organisations to be the alternate or deputy for each appointed member;

to provide for the deputy member to act in place of a member if the member is unable to act because of sickness, absence or other cause;

to provide procedures for the resignation of members of the board and the removal of members who do not perform or become incapable of performing their duties; and

to provide procedures for the replacement of members who cease to hold office in the relevant organisations.

The amendments contained in this Bill reflect the recommendations of the October 2002 review and have been considered by the industry, members of the board and other interested parties.

These changes will assist in improving the effectiveness of the operation of the Coal Miners' Welfare Board and the Coal Miners' Welfare Fund. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr J.L. Bradshaw.

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): The unusual nature of the speech just delivered means that the Minister for State Development has forgone his capacity to speak on this Bill other than in reply.