

CORONAVIRUS — FLY IN, FLY OUT WORKERS — ROSTERS

Statement

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral) [5.58 pm]: I know that it has been a long week so I will try to keep this brief. It has been quite a big challenge over the last month or so throughout my electorate. Something that seems to be popping up now more than ever is that as we get closer to slowly bringing in all these restrictions, things are starting to get more difficult, particularly for industry. But there is a right way and a wrong way to go about it, in my view. We have seen a public reaction to a proposed roster from Woodside earlier this week, which was two weeks' isolation, 12 weeks on a vessel or a rig out in the middle of the ocean, and then four weeks off. That was dubbed a "suicide roster" right across the media. Woodside copped a fair hiding on that, and rightly so. I think that in consultation with their employees and the unions involved, Woodside would have got a better outcome but, instead, it chose to push ahead and proposed something that is as outrageous as that type of roster. Considering where we have come from over the last three to four years in discussions around mental health and suicides amongst fly in, fly out workers in the industry, it was absolutely disgraceful to see it jump so quickly to a roster that long.

I have discovered that someone has beaten Woodside in this space. It did not surprise me to hear what company it was. When I was a union official in the north west, I started organising at the Sino iron project at Cape Preston. There is an absolutely disgraceful employer out there called CPPC—Cape Preston Port Company—that totally throws out any rules when it comes to dealing with its workforce. It does not care when it comes to the people who are working on the tools, building this business up, shipping out the iron ore and putting money into the pockets of investors. It does not seem to care. CPPC has now decided to change its roster. Its roster for employees was two weeks on and one week off, which was quite a heavy roster anyway. I am not a big fan of two and one. I think two and two is probably the preferred roster. Just remember that Rio Tinto and other mining companies have now switched to a two and two roster. From one and one, or nine days on and five days off, they have gone to two weeks on and two weeks off. That is to stop travel and to make it a bit easier to keep people isolated and less likely that COVID-19 may pop up. But, no, Cape Preston Port Company had to go one step further. It went from two weeks on and one week off to two weeks' day shift and two weeks' night shift, and then two weeks off. It has doubled the roster. Workers are on two weeks' night shift and two weeks' day shift. If that were not bad enough, this company already absolutely lashes its employees because they work a 14-hour day every day for two weeks. They have to travel an hour to get from the camp down to the site. That is not incorporated into their work hours, by the way; that is added to their time off. Their time off is an hour travel to the port in the morning and an hour travel back at night-time. They end up doing a 14-hour day. It has now implemented, I believe without consultation with employees, four weeks straight with two weeks off—two weeks of nights and two weeks of days, each doing 14 hours. This is what I call a suicide roster.

Not only has CPPC done this, but its supervisors and managers, who are not doing high-risk work and who are in offices and air-conditioned cars, have gone from a roster of nine days on and five days off to two weeks on and two weeks off. It is absolutely disgraceful. The company segregates its workers and says to office staff and management, "No worries, we're going to put you on the nice two weeks on and two weeks off roster, but for all the others we're going to chuck you on a suicide roster." It is an absolute disgrace. I only found this out late this afternoon. I will be following this up. I do not think it should be accepted.

We need to understand that we are in trying times—I get that; I absolutely understand that—but it is important that employers understand also that workers are the reason that companies are still producing. We have to protect them through this process. We have to make sure that mental health issues do not spiral. We have to make sure that workers have a voice on occupational health and safety and on roster changes. We also have to make sure that we do not segregate workers based upon whether they are in management or a worker. The people working on the tugs in the port through TAMS are on an equal-time roster—four weeks on and four weeks off. This poor class of workers at CPPC have been downtrodden and kicked to the kerb while everyone else is on good rosters. It is an absolute disgrace. CPPC should be ashamed of itself. I think that Sino should really take a long, hard look at its contractors. That is the other problem—we constantly hear big clients like BHP, Rio Tinto and Woodside talk about how great their work is and how great their policies are, but then their subcontractors could not care less about what they do. That is when we see a drop in standards. That is when we see the bad suicide rosters like CPPC has done here. I think it has to stop. I am really concerned that this is one that I have heard of—how many have I not heard of, particularly in the gold industry, the iron ore industry and the oil and gas industry? These industries are going to be under a lot of pressure. We are really struggling at the moment out there to try to get a grasp on where it is all heading. It is these little companies like CPPC, which just string their employees up and throw darts at them, that should be out there and shamed, in my view. I am going to follow this up. A roster like that should be condemned for what it is—a suicide roster.