



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION  
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR DICKSON**

**TRANSCRIPT**

**ADDRESS TO THE MINERALS WEEK LUNCH,  
CANBERRA**

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E&OE.....

Thank you very much for that warm introduction.

Can I acknowledge my Parliamentary colleagues – Ted O’Brien and Susie McDonald, with us today and other Parliamentary colleagues who are here.

Thank you very much to your CEO, Tania Constable, and your team.

Tania, it’s fantastic to be able to work with you. We don’t always agree on different issues, but we do have the ability to act in the national interest and to work together in that cause. You are somebody with backbone, and in a time when people cower because they’re worried about memes on social media, you stand up on behalf of your members, the industry more generally, but certainly on behalf of our country as well.

And I want to say thank you to you and to the Council for the work and the leadership that you’re providing.

Could I also acknowledge and thank Andrew Michelmore, and congratulate him on his appointment. To the entire Board of Directors. And to all our friends here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, when we take a long view of Australia’s mining history, we can see that mining helped fasten our country’s development, it helped us to hasten Australia’s end of protectionism and to embrace an economic liberalism.

Throughout all the digging and each of our five major booms, every Australian has been a beneficiary of the mining sector.

Australia’s economic success is interwoven with the success of Australian mining.

The riches dug from the Australian dirt have enriched our lives and the lives of many others here and around the world.

The gross value added by mining to the Australian economy most recently stands at \$354 billion – that's about 14.5 per cent of our country's GDP.

Mining makes up 48 per cent of Western Australia's economy, a third of the Northern Territory's and 18 per cent of my home state in Queensland.

And in South Australia, and Tasmania, and New South Wales, mining constitutes just shy of 5 per cent of their economies.

Export earnings in the financial year gone are a record almost half a trillion dollars at \$455 billion – representing almost 70 per cent of the value of all of our country's exports.

The more Australian mining surges ahead, the more it gives to our society.

Your sector pays more than \$39 billion in company tax, in fact it's a third of annual tax and many Australians wouldn't be able to relay that fact to you.

An additional \$24 billion in royalties to state and territory governments.

Of course, the industry has its detractors – and the detractors are growing in number.

But we should celebrate Australian mining more widely.

It is, after all, the largest contributor to our national economy.

In more recent years, the mining sector has found itself increasingly in the crosshairs of environmental extremists and far-left politicians advocating for socialist-style wealth redistribution agendas.

Such critics, of course, conveniently ignore your clean operational practices and carbon-reducing efforts.

And for such critics, your tax contributions will never be enough.

Yet their messages have gained traction because they're all too infrequently challenged.

We need to nurture a greater acknowledgement of the effect of your sector's economic contribution on Australians' lives.

We need to hear more parents tell their children that the schools that they attend and the cities they live in have been built thanks to the contributions of the mining sector.

We need to hear more teachers tell their students that the roads, the bridges and railways we travel on have been constructed thanks to the contributions of the mining sector.

We need to hear more Australians express that we have a first-class society and social safety net thanks to the contributions of your sector.

Now, there are many other parts of Australia's mining story we need to tell more often.

Revenues from mining commodities shielded us from the worst of the global financial crisis.

They served as a shock absorber during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your sector contributed to the recent Budget surplus – an inconvenient fact for the Treasurer.

Of course, we don't know when, and from where, the next economic punch will come.

But it will come, and when it does, the health of our mining sector will again determine whether we deflect that punch or whether it knocks us down.

Now, the Minister for Resources, Madeleine King, is a good person. She supports your sector and recognises the importance of mining for our economy and our future.

But she's part of a government which doesn't have your sector's interests at heart.

She doesn't carry weight within the Cabinet, her views do not prevail, and you see that in announcements of government policy.

The Prime Minister spoke about supporting the mining industry during the course of this week.

But in reality, his decisions are imposing added challenges on the mining sector.

Of course, Labor starts out ok – that's always been the history in this country – but then they run out of money, and they come after yours.

We've seen it all before, time after time.

Mr Albanese's now had two budgets to express the economic will of the government. But things have clearly got worse for most Australians over the course of the last couple of years.

If not for the resources sector, our country would certainly be in recession this very day.

In his Budget speech, the Treasurer couldn't even bring himself to say, 'resources sector'.

Instead, he just said in his speech quite proudly that we export 'things' – like there was no better description for your sector; the 'things' that we export, that he relies on, that underpin the spending announcements in his Budget.

And increasingly, as we've just seen in the last couple of hours in New South Wales, Labor sees mining as a piggy bank for its coffers.

The Prime Minister and the Treasurer are happy to take your profits and investment for his bottom line, but whack your sector with higher taxes and inflexible IR laws.

With the Albanese Government's 'renewables-only' mentality, Energy Minister Chris Bowen is on an anti-coal and anti-gas crusade, regardless of what Madeleine King tells you.

He is doing everything possible to undermine these Australian industries which will have significant implications for our domestic supply, for energy security, for export markets and foreign investment.

The Minister's intervened in the energy market with centralised price fixing.

And yet, price ceilings simply disincentivise production given that businesses can't recover production costs.

Resultant supply shortages and rising demand inevitably drive-up prices for consumers and small businesses.

Additionally, Minister Bowen secured passage of the Government's new carbon tax with the help of the Greens – a tax three times higher than Julia Gillard's.

Of course, we all want to protect and improve our environment.

And your sector is making great strides in reducing emissions whilst managing commercial viability.

Yet this cynical and prejudicial carbon tax lacks balance.

It enforces environmental objectives and it elevates them above economic imperatives.

This lack of balance is also evident in the Government's proposed changes to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Such changes further exemplify the Government's enmity towards the resource sector.

And when you thought it couldn't get any worse – and I'm not a clairvoyant but when I speak about Tanya Plibersek and her intention for your industry, I don't see a bright future.

Now Tanya Plibersek is an activist from way back, and now, as the Environment Minister, plans to establish, as you know, a new centralised Environment Protection Agency.

The Minister will delegate powers to bureaucrats who will be able to approve or reject projects. Instead of environmental and economic benefits being weighed evenly, here too the scales will tip in the favour of environmental goals as part of Labor's 'Nature Positive Plan'.

Undoubtedly, this will have significant ramifications for the mining sector.

New regulations and approvals will put hurdles in the path of those seeking to start or invest in new mining ventures.

Existing projects will be subjected to additional red tape.

Let's also not forget that the Albanese Government has funded \$10 million to green activists to wage lawfare against previously-approved coal and gas projects.

As we saw at its national conference, the Labor Party is increasingly held captive by its far-left faction and groups like the Labor Environment Action Network.

Beholden to its union paymasters, the Albanese Government's industrial relations reforms should be of significant concern to the mining sector and every small business across the country.

Yes of course, as you well know, the current system is far too complex. But instead of improving it, the Government's now made announcements that will make a bad situation much, much worse.

The proposed changes are far from being 'very modest' as Tony Burke describes them.

Even his 'closing a labour-hire loophole' tagline is disingenuous.

And full credit to everyone in this room who has provided support to the advertising campaign, telling truth and providing Australians with a fair perspective in relation to those proposed laws.

The proposed changes will undoubtedly damage our industries and our economy at exactly the wrong time, and it will undermine a core workplace principle: that employees with more experience and skills should be entitled to higher wages than their counterparts with less experience and skills.

The Government wants to treat employees as a collective rather than individuals.

Moreover, they want to deny employers the choice to use labour hire workers and independent contractors.

Such restrictions put significant constraints on companies wanting to expand or to start new projects, to construct new infrastructure, or simply manage their operations as they see fit.

And as importantly, it restricts the employee's choice about what is right for their circumstances, and what is right for their families.

The Government is jeopardising the viability of many labour-hire businesses and small operators in your sector and others.

If these businesses go bust then there's less workers and service providers in the system, there's more pressure on supply chains, and consequently, fewer mining projects commencing – and who pays for that? The Australian consumer.

Now, since the Hawke and Keating era, we've moved progressively away from a centralised wage-fixing system to an enterprise-level agreements system based on productivity and reward for effort. And it's served our country well.

These laws unwind thousands of successful workplace-level agreements that have enabled business to grow and employees to receive higher wages, as Gerhard pointed out before.

The Coalition, and I commit today, will stand against Labor's nonsense.

We should be under no misapprehension that these laws will erode the flexible choice and competitiveness which has underpinned an effective 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

Again, I want to commend Tania and the Minerals Council for your fight against bad legislation which will only make it tougher for the times ahead, for the uncertainty that might be just in front of us, and the great uncertainty that's already being faced by Australian families and small businesses contending with a Labor-created cost of living crisis.

So, ladies and gentlemen, the Resources Minister, as I say, will continue to express the Government's support.

She'll do it sincerely.

She'll say that she supports your sector when she attends conferences, visits mine sites and makes public statements.

And yet, the broader actions of the Albanese Government paint a very different picture.

As I have outlined, its energy, environmental and industrial relations policies expose a government which does not hear your sector's best interests.

It does not have your sector's best interests at heart.

And of course, your sector is among many which are suffering, and will suffer under Labor.

In the last 15 months, we've seen the Government's true nature emerge.

It's a very different character than the one it presented prior to the election.

The Government clearly has a 'big government' agenda.

It sees business and industry as instruments of the state to further its own goals.

Now I don't believe since the Whitlam Government have we witnessed such a magnitude of government intervention.

At the recent Labor Party national conference, Prime Minister Albanese said that he wants to 'change the country'.

Dr Chalmers has written about a better capitalism.

Labor's mission is not one of considered reform but of radical reinvention.

It wants to reduce the autonomy of the private sector, enlarge the power of government and the unions, and put government at the very centre of people's lives.

And this means more taxation, it means more regulation, it means more market-warping and damaging subsidies, and more interference – the very opposite of what we need.

Already, our economy is reeling from the effects of this agenda.

Business confidence is down.

Insolvencies are up.

Real wages are going backwards.

Productivity has fallen by 4.6 per cent in the last year alone – the largest drop since records began in 1979.

Our closest partners are turning to other markets to invest in because they are seeing sovereign risk for the first time.

Like me, you've all spoken with Japanese and South Korean counterparts. They see now a level of sovereign risk in our country that wasn't here just a couple of years ago.

And there is a pervasive atmosphere of economic uncertainty.

The Government has amplified inflationary pressures in recklessly increasing spending by \$185 billion since it formed government.

The Albanese Government is pulling all the wrong levers, and the economy is suffering as a result of it.

We need to revitalise our economy, we need to reinvigorate our industries, and we need to re-attract that foreign investment.

That's the great history of this sector and we need to fight for it into the future.

But you don't do that with a 'big government' strategy and a return to protectionism of the past.

Our nation is clearly best-served when we embrace economic liberalism.

Our industries thrive through government incentives of less taxation, of less regulation and less centralised interference.

Yes, of course the world has changed with a resurgence of authoritarian regimes and great power competition.

But that doesn't mean all nations should, can, or indeed are abandoning economic liberalism.

Or that the free market is shutting.

On the contrary, democratic economies are simply reassessing their type and depth of

engagement in particularly risky markets – particularly in our region.

The term ‘friend-shoring’ might be new.

But favouring certain supply chains with allies and trusted partners is not a new concept.

So there continues to be vast opportunities for Australia, old and new – provided we have a stable, competitive and attractive environment in which to invest.

Provided we put our trust in economic liberalism while taking advantage of an atmosphere of greater friend-shoring.

And provided we play to our strengths as a nation.

One of our greatest strengths is mining.

Many nations still want our high quality and clean coal and gas.

In an age of friend-shoring, our allies and partners are looking to us to supply and process critical minerals and rare earths which we have in abundance and are needed for new technologies, for defence capabilities, for renewables, batteries, electric vehicles and more besides.

And as new nuclear technologies are increasingly adopted – the small and micro modular reactors among them – Australia has a chance to contribute to a growing demand for uranium.

As you know, Australia holds the world’s largest uranium deposits.

Yet we only supply about 8 per cent of global demand – it’s madness.

I welcome the Minerals Council’s submission which called for uranium to be added to Australia’s critical minerals list.

And I want to, again, thank many people in this room for their work and for their advocacy in relation to a fair debate on the issue of emerging nuclear technologies and the way in which they can be used in this country.

The call was backed up by BHP’s Chief Technical Officer, Laura Tyler – and I’m grateful for that.

I want to commend another of our industry’s great leaders, Gina Rinehart, for her courage in recently calling for Australia to embrace nuclear power for a net zero future.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, Australia is sitting on its sixth major mining boom.

But the Albanese Government is putting that boom in jeopardy.

Labor’s big government agenda and economic policies are clearly damaging our economy, harming our domestic performance, diminishing our competitiveness, and undermining our attractiveness for foreign investment.



The Liberal Party, in the modern context, is clearly the party for the Australian worker.

The Labor Party has become the party of the inner-city elites and Greens.

The Liberals value hard work and entrepreneurialism.

We want to help you keep more of what you work hard for.

We support a strong mining and resources sector because it's the right thing for our country.

Whereas, clearly, our opponents want to handicap your sector with higher taxes, more regulation, and legal activism.

The word of warning today is that it doesn't stop with what is being proposed today.

It's clear that the Government is on a roll and that they need more revenue coming in the doors as they continue to increase spending.

And if there is not a line in the sand drawn, it will be incrementally the case that this industry becomes the target of Treasury officials as they look for more and more innovative ways to tax, to regulate, and to make it harder for your companies to operate, to employ, to create and generate wealth in our country.

Thank you for what you do for our country, and I look forward, very much, to our continued engagement and the opportunity to work together.

Thank you.

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