



Speech by

Hon. Geoff Wilson

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mine Safety

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy) (10.17 am): While we reap the benefits of the resources boom we should never lose sight of the importance of safety in our mines—not for a second—because nothing is more important than that. SIMTARS, the Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station in my department, provides a range of services to the mining industry and undertakes research, all in the name of safety.

One of the many hazards facing underground mine workers is the constant threat of a gas explosion. Here SIMTARS is hard at work. It has designed a range of gas monitoring systems that are used in most of Queensland's underground coalmines. That technology has also been exported to China, India, the USA and New Zealand.

Fatigue is another major hazard. In June last year the Mines Inspectorate commenced an audit of fatigue management along with safety systems in relation to the impact of the use of alcohol and drugs and physical and psychological impairment. As a result, those mining companies that did not have training schemes in place to deal with fatigue related incidents were required to do so. The inspectorate is also investigating options the mining industry could adopt to help prevent fatigue related incidents. One option includes bus services for mine workers who travel long distances to get to and from mine sites. They have every right to feel safe in the knowledge they will get home safely after their shift. So do their families and friends.

In March I told the House that mines inspectors would undertake a series of unannounced safety audits at targeted mines across Queensland. The audits target strata control, ventilation, fire prevention, vehicle control, fatigue management and electricity safety. Three audits have been completed. All up, 10 audits will have been completed and reviewed by the end of the year. Some of the early findings hang a lantern on serious safety issues. That is what they were designed to do. It is up to mining companies to take action and if they fail to act they will face full consequences.

To help the Inspectorate carry out the audits, some of the positions have been transferred from head office to the regions. The department has also embarked on a recruitment drive with the intention of bringing the Inspectorate to its full complement of 42 inspectors. While mine operators, employers and workers are responsible for safety and health on the job, I am determined that the Mines Inspectorate will continue to support the industry operating safely.