

Question on Notice

No. 1572

Asked on Wednesday, 16 October 2019

MR M BERKMAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS (HON L ENOCH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the rehabilitation of the Ensham coal mine—

Will the Minister (a) advise why has the department failed to publicly notify Idemitsu's application for a major change to its EA which would leave all 11 final voids unfilled, including 3 on a flood plain, (b) commit to ensuring that the application will be publicly notified to ensure affected landholders and locals are given a chance to object, (c) advise why the current \$216m financial assurance given by Idemitsu is so much lower than the \$719m cost estimate from the January 2016 report of the Targeted Compliance Program and (d) advise what consideration the Minister has given to the risk of undermining the public's confidence in the new Mined Land Rehabilitation Policy if Idemitsu's application to leave voids on the Nogoia River floodplain is approved?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to upholding high environmental standards, including in mine rehabilitation. This commitment was demonstrated through the passage of comprehensive legislative reforms in November 2018. Those reforms compel mining companies to plan for and undertake progressive rehabilitation, and protect taxpayers from the financial burden of the clean-up from failed mines.

The government's reforms ensure effective rehabilitation, which results in suitable environmental and community outcomes post-mining.

The Ensham Coal Mine is not a new mine. As a result, progressive rehabilitation and closure planning requirements for the mine will be considered under Part 7, Transitional Provisions of the *Mineral and Energy Resources (Financial Provisioning) Act 2018*.

I am advised that the Department of Environment and Science (DES) as the regulator, is currently assessing an environmental authority (EA) amendment application for the Ensham Coal Mine made by Idemitsu Australia Resources (Idemitsu). DES has sought further information from Idemitsu to support its assessment.

DES acknowledges and respects the role of community involvement and public interest in decisions of this nature and is considering avenues to seek advice, comment or information about the application.

DES is committed to ensuring that all land affected by mining activities will be rehabilitated to a stable condition, that is safe and non-polluting and specific environment risks posed by mining activities on the floodplain are managed effectively.

The Ensham Mine will need to transition to the new Progressive Rehabilitation and Closure (PRC) Plan framework and will be required to prepare a PRC Plan with time-based milestones, to ensure rehabilitation occurs progressively over the life of the mine. This new framework will ensure greater transparency and certainty for the community, the company and government, as the regulator.

In relation to financial assurance for the Ensham Coal Mine, the total rehabilitation liability for the site is based on the current plan of operations submitted by Idemitsu. Once a decision is made in relation to the current EA amendment application and actual rehabilitation outcomes for the site are finalised, Idemitsu will be required to apply for an estimated rehabilitation cost for those approved outcomes.