

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1489

asked on Wednesday, 29 November 2006

MR LAWLOR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY (MR WILSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 24 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement regarding the Mines Inspectorate's review—

What is the progress in implementing recommendations from the review, any other steps being undertaken to improve mine safety in Queensland and efforts that have been undertaken to advance mine safety in your trading partners?

ANSWER:

My Department is currently implementing 42 recommendations from a recent review of the Mines Inspectorate that will result in the creation of a sustainable and multi-skilled inspectorate.

To date, 31 of these recommendations have been successfully implemented, including the development of a more streamlined structure with a stronger emphasis on a team approach to investigations, audits and enforcement. To this end, two occupational hygienists, an ergonomist and two specialist investigators have been employed to broaden the skills base of the Mines Inspectorate.

The Mines Inspectorate has established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Queensland Mines Rescue Service and Workplace Health and Safety. These MOU not only provide more certainty in relation to reporting structures and mutual services provided, but they also foster a more active and coordinated working relationship between the agencies.

The Mines Inspectorate has also reviewed and updated its existing operational systems and databases, and established new databases where required.

The remaining 11 recommendations primarily revolve around the development of the Advanced Diploma in Workplace Inspection and other various legislative, policy and administrative issues requiring stakeholder consultation. It is expected that these recommendations will be completed in early 2007.

The Queensland Government addresses mine safety by providing a professional inspectorate which monitors the mining companies' fulfilment of their safety and health responsibilities. The Queensland Government is further assisting mine safety by supporting mine safety research at the Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station

(Simtars), a purpose built testing facility located near Brisbane which conducts research predominantly in the areas of mine fire and explosion prevention.

Gas monitoring technology developed by Simtars which assists in the monitoring and control of underground coal mine fires and explosions has already been supplied to China and India and further sales of this gas monitoring equipment are in the pipeline. Mine safety training has also been provided to industry groups from China and India. This training has been conducted in Australia and at mine sites in China and India.

The Mines and Explosives Inspectorates within the Department of Mines and Energy are involved in the setting and regulation of health and safety standards for the Queensland mining industry. Queensland currently enjoys one of the best health and safety records in the world. However, one death is one death too many. Safety and health must have first priority. Mine safety will be effectively implemented, mine by mine, employer by employer and worker by worker.

The Department, through Simtars and the Mines Inspectorate, together with the Queensland Resources Council and major unions conjointly organise and run an emergency exercise at a different mine each year to test emergency response capabilities. Results and findings, including strengths and weaknesses of the exercise, are published for industry attention and action.

This year a major seminar and workshop was also held in Central Queensland on the subject of emergency response. The seminar titled 'Fight or Flight - the First Five Hours of an Emergency Response' attracted 105 participants from interstate and overseas. Queensland is acknowledged as following best practice with respect to ensuring that emergency response capabilities are kept in effective readiness.