QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 694

asked on Wednesday, 10 May 2006

MRS MILLER ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND WATER (MR PALASZCZUK)—

QUESTION:

Will he advise of the work undertaken at the Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station facility at Redbank and how this facility provides assistance to the Queensland and international mining industries?

ANSWER:

The Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station (Simtars) undertakes mine safety research and provides a wide range of health and safety services to the mining industry.

The work undertaken by Simtars is delivered through its five distinct work units in the areas of;

- occupational hygiene,
- environment and chemistry
- electrical testing and certification
- mining research and development
- safety and training.

The Occupational Hygiene and Environment Chemistry Centre enhances health and safety through the measurement and management of workplace and environmental conditions, development of mine safety technology such as mine gas monitoring systems, and the provision of general laboratory services.

Mine safety technology developed by the Centre for Queensland Coal Mines has achieved international recognition. Over the last four years this technology, in the form of mine gas monitoring systems, has been installed in mines in the United States of America, China, New Zealand and India.

The Engineering, Testing and Certification Centre specialises in providing testing and certification services for electrical equipment used in hazardous locations such as underground coal mines. It also provides testing, investigation, calibration and certification of mechanical equipment and materials. The centre has played a key role in representing the interests of the Queensland mining industry in the development of new uniform world wide standards for electrical equipment certification.

The Mining Research and Development Centre supports specific clients and the wider mining community with specialised research, consulting and testing services. It plays a critical role in furthering industry knowledge on mine safety while assisting stakeholders to develop and apply new safety techniques to their operations.

Currently, the Mining Research and Development Centre is working on the development of a mine self escape vehicle with the aid of industry funding from the Australian Coal Association Research Program. The four stage project aims to develop inexpensive modifications to existing diesel vehicles used in coal mines which will allow the vehicles to be operated in the mine after an explosion. After such an event the atmosphere may be filled with poisonous and explosive gases and visibility may be very poor making escape from the mine extremely difficult.

Stage three of the project is nearing completion. During this stage a prototype vehicle fitted with a high speed methane analyser, a compressed air breathing supply and an electronic navigation system is being trialled for three months at a coal mine.

The US Mine Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health have shown interest in the mine self escape vehicle following the Sago mine disaster in West Virginia earlier this year.

Other work being undertaken by the Mining Research and Development Centre includes research into the use of electronic noses to detect spontaneous combustion earlier than other contemporary methods, and the use of remote sensing techniques to aid in mine rescue.

The Safety and Training Centre assists the mining community to improve health and safety by delivering a range of tailored training courses on site or at Simtars' Redbank training facilities. The centre has provided safety training to over ten thousand trainees in Queensland and has been providing specialised mine safety training to mine workers and officials from India, China and Vietnam since 1997.

Simtars is a critical element in the ongoing safe operation of Queensland's mining industry and represents the Queensland Government's commitment to continuous improvement of health and safety within the mining industry.

Simtars' successful ongoing export of mine safety technology and training recognises Queensland's Smart State expertise in mine safety and demonstrates its international reputation.