

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 113

asked on Thursday, 14 February 2008

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

QUESTION:

As in the last financial year Queensland sold more than \$24b worth of coal, petroleum and minerals-

What is the Government doing to ensure mining safety standards are maintained in these boom times?

ANSWER:

The Government is pleased with the increased State revenue from the mining and petroleum industries as a healthy mining industry improves the standards of living for all Queenslanders.

I recognise that it is essential that the increased demands for our mineral products does not result in a reduction on safety and health standards for the workforce.

It is important that these standards are monitored by a competent inspectorate. Expanding and improving the Mines Inspectorate's capacity has been a major achievement over the last two years.

Implementation of the recommendations of the 2005 external review of the Mines Inspectorate is substantially complete. This has resulted in an increased number of inspectors in the field achieved through transfers from head office; the establishment and filling of new positions relating to ergonomics, occupational hygiene and investigations; and the establishment of additional competency based training for inspectors.

The remuneration of the inspectorate has been reviewed, and as a result of this and a rigorous recruiting campaign, the number of field inspectors is now at an historical high level. Thirteen new inspectors have been recruited in the past 18 months.

As you are aware, in March 2007, I announced in Parliament that there would be a series of unannounced audits of underground mines. Ten mines were audited. Following the audits, I held discussions in my office with the senior corporate managers of the companies involved. I stressed to them the need for continued improvement in safety and health and placed the onus on them to ensure that this happened.

I have since written to all large mines in Queensland asking them to respond on how the issues identified in the audits are being addressed on their mines. Their responses are currently being evaluated.

A further activity in the Mines Inspectorate is the implementation of recommendations of the Peer Review of the annual statistical report which I initiated last year. Learnings from the review will improve the future statistical reports which will in turn provide excellent information to industry to help in developing their strategies to improve safety and health.

My department and I are committed to improving safety and health in the mining industry. Nothing is more important than the safety of the men and women who work in our mines.