

Question on Notice

No. 726

Asked on Friday, 17 July 2015

MS SIMPSON asked the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade (HON J TRAD) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister detail any new initiative introduced by the State Labor Government which has increased or enhanced dust suppression or reduced dust emissions from coal trains?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Maroochydore for the question.

Currently comprehensive Rail Coal Dust Management Plans are in place at all export coal mines, coal railways and coal terminals in Queensland. These Rail Coal Dust Management Plans integrate treatment measures at mine rail-loading facilities, during rail transport and during train unloading at coal terminals to ensure that dust emissions from trains are reduced.

The development of Rail Coal Dust Management Plans are a relatively new initiative that was instigated during the period of the Bligh Labor Government. They were developed following a direction from the then Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, to the then Queensland Rail Limited, to undertake an Environmental Evaluation of coal dust emissions, from coal trains on the Central Queensland rail systems.

The resulting *QR Network (now Aurizon) Coal Dust Management Plan (2010)* was a landmark development in Australia and has been the basis for development and spread of such plans across all Queensland coal rail systems.

The most recently developed *South West System Coal Dust Management Plan* was implemented in November 2013, on the rail line running from the Darling Downs to the Port of Brisbane.

The key dust mitigation measure is the use of coal-load veneering, a world-leading dust suppression technology involving spraying an environmentally-friendly binding agent onto the surface of loaded coal wagons to minimise dust. Dust reductions of around 75 per cent are indicated to-date.

The former Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts (DSITIA) assessed the coal dust mitigation treatments and compliance with air quality standards and found dust levels on the South West rail system comply with all national and state air quality standards and guidelines, at a level more than 70 per cent below the standards required.

In addition, a continuous monitoring program has been implemented to measure the effectiveness of dust treatments by the South West System Coal Dust Management Plan. These results are updated hourly and are available at www.ehp.qld.gov.au/air/data/search.php.

I am advised that the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation is currently finalising a follow-up 12 month dust monitoring program, (*Western-Metropolitan Rail System Coal Dust Monitoring Program – Phase 2*), with the report due by 30 September 2015.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads will review the reports and develop recommendations for government in relation to further monitoring and assessment.

In addition to the above, since the election of the Palaszczuk Government, three new Queensland coal mine projects have received environmental approval to proceed, subject to conditions.

The Rolleston Coal Expansion Project, Red Hill Coal Project and the Taraborah Coal Project have been conditioned or made commitments to implement Coal Dust Management Plans that integrate with and form part of the implementation of the *Aurizon Coal Dust Management Plan* in place across the Central Queensland coal rail network.