

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1410

asked on Wednesday, 17 October 2018

MR D LAST ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY (HON DR A LYNHAM)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline in relation to the implementation of the recommendations of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee the (a) original budget for implementation of the recommendations, (b) current revised budget for implementation of the recommendations, (c) number of recommendations currently completed, (d) outstanding recommendations that are still to be implemented, (e) completion timeframes and (f) completion of the Mine Safety and Health Authority in Mackay?

ANSWER:

- (a) The Queensland Government has invested more than \$21 million over two years to deliver on the recommendations from the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis (CWP) Select Committee report no. 2. This funding supports the establishment of a Program Management Office (PMO), led by a person independent of government, to lead consultation with stakeholders on a preferred model for the regulator; deliver on-ground activities to improve dust monitoring, reporting and assessment, and audits and inspections; and to continue to implement recommendations from the Monash Review. This funding builds on the \$3.737 million already committed by the government.
- (b) The government will invest further resources as necessary to embed reforms to protect the occupational health of coal mine workers, including reforms to the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme.
- (c) A significant body of work has been undertaken by the government to address coal workers' pneumoconiosis and protect coal mine workers in Queensland. To date, the government has actioned 64 of the 68 recommendations contained in the CWP Select Committee report.
- (d) Action is progressing on the remaining four recommendations contained in the CWP Select Committee report. These recommendations relate to the occupational exposure limits for respirable coal dust and silica; and the protection of coal workers involved in the transportation and handling of coal outside a coal mine.
- (e) The government supports the setting of occupational exposure limits based on scientific evidence. Safe Work Australia is currently undertaking a review of workplace exposure limits including respirable coal dust and silica. The review of all exposure limits is scheduled to be completed in 2019, but Safe Work Australia is prioritising review of respirable coal dust and silica. As the lead agency for national worker health and safety policy, Safe Work Australia is

appropriately positioned to deliver recommendations based on evidence-based methodology. Further consideration of occupational exposure limits will be undertaken following the completion of the Safe Work Australia review. As an interim measure, the government has amended the Coal Mining Safety and Health Regulation 2017 to reduce the prescribed occupational exposure limit for respirable dust in Queensland coal mines. To protect coal workers, the government has also established a stakeholder working group to develop a new code of practice for coal-fired power station workers regarding respirable dust monitoring and reporting. The code of practice will be provided to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations for approval under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

- (f) In the response to the CWP Select Committee recommendation that a Mine Safety and Health Authority be established and based in Mackay, the government recognised and supported the importance of ensuring appropriate independence of the regulator from the industry facilitation within the government. The government committed to establishing a PMO, led by an independent person external to government, to consult with stakeholders and provide advice to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy on the recommendation. The PMO consulted with industry, unions and other stakeholders in early 2018 and publicly released a number of discussion papers about the CWP Select Committee recommendations. The advice of the independent PMO, incorporating stakeholder feedback, is now being considered by the government.