QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 878

asked on Friday, 16 June 2023

MR L MCCALLUM ASKED THE MINISTER FOR RESOURCES (HON S STEWART)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on how the Safety in mines testing and research station within Resources Safety and Health Queensland, is enhancing safety and health outcomes for coal mine workers?

ANSWER:

The Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station (Simtars) was established in 1983 following the tragedies of the Box Flat Colliery and Kianga No 1 Colliery underground mine explosions.

It started operations in 1986 and commissioned a purpose-built analytical and research facility at Redbank, near Ipswich, in 1988. In 1997, an office and a laboratory were opened in Mackay to serve the Central Queensland region.

Simtars has grown to become a world-leading centre for mining safety and health research—delivering complementary scientific, engineering, testing and training services nationally and internationally.

One area in which Simtars continues to focus is in its mine gas monitoring system, Safegas, which is an integral component in an underground coal mine safety and health management system.

The Safegas data acquisition tool, the original of which was developed over 25 years ago in response to the 1994 Moura underground coal mine disaster, displays gas concentrations and gas ratios, determines explosibility probability, and triggers alarms when tolerance values are breached. This supports onsite decision making regarding the safety of the mine atmospheres, in real time. It is also a key tool utilised as part of Simtars' 24/7 emergency technical response service.

In its current iteration, Simtars is working closely with industry representatives and experts to deliver the fifth generation of the tool (Safegas V5). Coal operators will see improved functionality, including mobility and scalability, which will enable mines to accommodate increased numbers of gas detectors and locations. It will also reduce risk and time associated with onsite commissioning, increase flexibility and integration with other third-party systems, support better data analysis, reporting and predictive trending of mine gases.