

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 396

asked on Tuesday, 1 May 2018

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the 68 recommendations made by the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee—

Will the Minister advise how many of the recommendations have been implemented?

ANSWER:

Since the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis select committee tabled its report, the Queensland Government has been progressing work in relation to all 68 of the report's recommendations. To support this, the government announced funding of more than \$25 million over two years to continue to deliver reforms to protect the health and safety of coal mine workers.

The department is currently on track to deliver 61 of the 68 recommendations of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis Select Committee by July 2018.

Included among these recommendations is work from the first independent review by Monash University of the respiratory component of the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme. Implementation of the Monash recommendations is close to being finalised. Changes already in place include coal miners' compulsory chest X-rays being assessed by suitably qualified doctors at least twice; and compulsory health assessments for all coal mine workers when they enter the industry, while they are working, and voluntarily upon retirement.

In addition, last year, amendments were made to workers' compensation legislation to:

- Introduce a medical examination process for retired or former coal workers concerned that they may have CWP or a mining occupational dust lung disease.
- Allow for the re-opening of claims for workers with pneumoconiosis (e.g. CWP or silicosis) if their disease progresses.

Completion of the Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis recommendations is a priority of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, which has 13 full time staff dedicated to implementing the health reforms of the Monash review, which were adopted by the committee in its recommendations. Also, a Project Management Office of five full time staff is progressing work in relation to the committee's recommendations about structural reforms to the safety and health regulatory model and its funding arrangements. In addition to this, other actions are being progressed by staff of the department and other agencies as part of their operational duties.

The project management office has been consulting with stakeholders and is on track to provide advice to government on the preferred option for an effective and appropriate regulatory model by the end of June 2018.

Following the project management office's advice, full implementation of some of these recommendations will likely require legislation.

A number of other operational activities are in train to give effect to the select committee's recommendations—for example, the coal mining inspectorate has focussed regulatory activity on managing and controlling respirable coal dust. Industry has made significant progress in reducing dust levels in Queensland coal mines. The level of non-compliance with dust levels has fallen to less than 1% in 2017, compared with 9% in 2016 reflecting the positive impact of regulatory amendment.

Further amendments to regulations to implement reforms to the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme are in the advanced stages of development.

As always, I urge any mine worker with health concerns to consult their doctor.