

Question on Notice
No. 1719
Asked on 25 October 2011

MR JOHNSON asked the Premier and Minister for Reconstruction (MS BLIGH)—

With reference to the government's policy to dramatically increase FIFO and DIDO workforces in the mining and gas industry despite the well recognised social deficits this creates in terms of family break-up and increased alcohol and drug abuse and violence in host communities—

What steps have been put in place to provide family relationship support to FIFO/DIDO families and drug and alcohol services in the host communities?

ANSWER:

I know that this is an issue of concern for the communities that the Honourable Member represents, however, the Member incorrectly states that the Queensland Government has a policy to dramatically increase Fly-in/fly-out and Drive-in/drive out (FIFO/DIDO) workforces in the mining and gas industry. This is not the case.

FIFO/DIDO workforce arrangements are neither new nor temporary and there are currently around 4,800 FIFO and DIDO workers across Queensland at 22 large metalliferous mines representing approximately 44% of their entire workforce. This is as a result of arrangements between companies and their workers – not any policy or actions of the Queensland Government.

The Queensland Government believes that workers should have the right to choose where they live. We have developed the *Major Resource Projects Housing Policy* to ensure there is a balance between the needs of industry for skills and experienced labour with the needs of local communities and individual workers. The policy supports the interests of communities affected by resources growth and secures greater choice around housing for workers in resource communities.

Under the policy, proponents for new resource projects must describe in their Environmental Impact Statement the projected size, nature and location of the workforce for the resource project, including the projected proportion of workers who will fly, drive or ferry in. When outlining plans for worker accommodation villages, project proponents must include a strategy for provision of recreation, infrastructure and social services, a management plan for the village including strategies for managing 'neighbour' interactions through options such as Codes of Conduct and should consider gender and cultural issues in the village as well as alcohol and drug use.

The policy will assist the Coordinator-General in assessing accommodation and housing issues in regional Queensland resource communities and striking the right balance between the social, economic and environmental impacts of major projects – particularly those in resources communities.

The Urban Land Development Authority is also delivering a diverse-mix of affordable housing in resource communities, including current developments in Roma, Blackwater, Moranbah and Clinton (Gladstone), to ensure that workers who want to live in these communities have housing to choose from.

To the extent that increases in FIFO/DIDO workforces could result in negative impacts, the Government's social impact assessment process would be expected to identify and manage such risks.

Social impact assessments are conducted to identify any social impacts on the community likely to arise from new or expanded resource developments. Appropriate strategies are then developed and implemented to help mitigate these impacts.

The Queensland Government provides funding under a range of prevention, early intervention and intensive support programs available across Queensland communities, including to those communities with concentrations of FIFO/DIDO workers.

For example, the Department of Communities funds 27 generalist counselling services, including Anglicare Central Queensland in Rockhampton, Moura and Biloela and Lifeline in the Central Queensland and Fraser Coast regions. In addition, in 2011-12, \$21.1 million will support 127 Targeted Family Support services across the State providing a range of services including advocacy services, counselling, parenting skills programs, facilitated support groups and practical in-home family support.

Queensland Health provides dedicated alcohol and drug services at many locations across Queensland, through the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Service (ATODS). Staff from these permanent regional ATODS sites also provide outreach services to more remote areas. ATODS provides a number of interventions that can reduce or cease harmful substance use, as well as supporting families of people experiencing problems associated with alcohol and drug use.

The Queensland Police Service is also committed to reducing the harm associated with alcohol and other drug use, including within rural and remote regions and mining communities. Within the *Queensland Drug Action Plan 2011-2012*, the Queensland Police Service takes a partnership approach to reducing levels of alcohol related violence and injury through community safety and preventative measures.

The Queensland Government believes that resource workers should have a choice of where and how they live and work and is providing family, drug and alcohol counselling services to support these workers and their families regardless of where they choose to live.