

Hon Kate Wilkinson

Minister of Labour



Media Statement

11 September 2012

Chief Inspector for mines appointed

Labour Minister Kate Wilkinson has today announced the appointment of Tony Forster as Chief Inspector for mines in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's High Hazards Unit.

Mr Forster will head a team of four specialist inspectors. He will lead the Ministry's health and safety regulatory work in relation to mines including both underground and opencast.

"This is a significant appointment for the High Hazards Unit. It is the result of an international search to find the best person from a very small pool of candidates," Ms Wilkinson says.

Mr Forster has 40 years' experience in British mining. He has deputised as the United Kingdom's HM Chief Inspector of Mines and is currently HM Principal Inspector of Mines.

"We are very pleased to have someone of Mr Forster's calibre in this role."

The High Hazards Unit was established to strengthen the capacity and expertise to inspect mines and ensure safety in the mining industry.

Mr Forster will start in the role in mid-January. Until then the Chief Inspector role has been filled temporarily by the Queensland Chief Mines Inspector Gavin Taylor who will continue to provide support to the High Hazards Unit.

Mr Taylor has been seconded from the Queensland Government and has made a significant contribution to the safety of New Zealand mining.

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Biography

Tony Forster has 40 years' experience in the British mining industry and is moving to New Zealand from the United Kingdom to take up the role. He started working in mines as a coalface production worker and worked his way up to become mine manager of a large colliery. He was also an active member of a Mines Rescue Team for 14 years, taking part in several underground rescue and recovery operations.

He has deputised as the United Kingdom's HM Chief Inspector of Mines and is currently HM Principal Inspector of Mines.

Mr Forster holds a Master of Science in Occupational Safety and Health and is a chartered Mining Engineer, a fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining and a member of the Institute of Mining Engineers Technical Committee.

He is the chief adviser to the UK Health and Safety Executive on mines rescue and emergency planning, is a Board Member of the International Mines Rescue Body and is a Principal Judge at International Mines Rescue competitions.