

Mining Accident News No.0916

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Wednesday 20 May 2009

Qld: Employee killed in Mt Isa mine accident

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

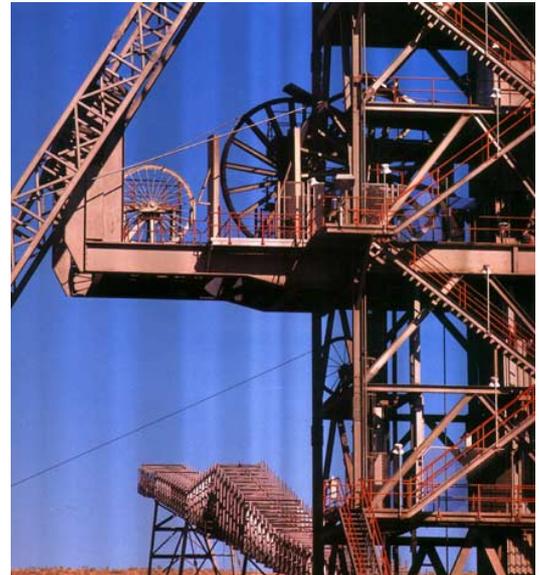
A person has died after an incident at Xstrata's George Fisher mine near Mount Isa in north-west Queensland.

The company says the 50-year-old man died after an underground incident involving heavy machinery at the underground metal mine just before midnight AEST.

Police and emergency crews are on the scene.

Xstrata says it is too early to know what caused the fatal accident.

It says underground mining operations have been suspended for 24 hours while a full investigation begins.



Headframe at the George Fisher mine, which supplies feed to the main processing and recovery plants at Mt Isa.

Xstrata spokesman Kevin Hendry says the man was a valued and longstanding employee and the company has extended its sympathy to his family and friends.

"He's been with the company for 35 years - it's extremely tough," he said.

"We've got a counselling service set up this morning for all employees and for his immediate family.

"We've suspended the underground operations for 24 hours.

"A full and thorough investigation has already commenced to investigate the cause of this tragedy.

"The police take control of the investigation and they are supported by the Department of Mines and Energy and the professional staff from Xstrata as well.

"Xstrata's condolences go out to his family, his workmates and his friends."

Six missing in southwest China coal mine flood

Extract from Xinhua, China

CHENGDU, Six workers are missing after a coal mine flooded in southwest China's Sichuan Province early Wednesday, the local work safety authority said.

The flooding happened at around 3 a.m. at Manao Coal Mine in Changning County of Yibin City, the Sichuan Provincial Work Safety Administration said in a press release.

It said 21 miners were in the pit, 13 of whom were evacuated immediately and two were rescued by dawn.

Rescuers were still searching for the missing workers as of noon.

Manao Coal Mine is a small, village-run colliery with a designed annual output of 30,000 tons.

South Africa: Gold Fields reports three fatalities in two days

Extract from Creamer Media's Mining Weekly, Garden View, South Africa

JOHANNESBURG (miningweekly.com) – JSE-listed Gold Fields on Wednesday confirmed that two employees had been

fatally injured in a seismically induced fall of ground accident, at the number 7 shaft, at the Kloof mine, on the West Rand.

The seismic event measured 1.5 on the Richter scale.

This followed a separate accident at the Kloof gold mine on Tuesday, in which one employee lost his life. This accident, which happened 2,225 m below surface in the main shaft, was also caused by a seismic event, with a magnitude of 1.5 on the Richter scale.

The names of the deceased are being withheld until their next of kin have been informed.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of our deceased colleagues. These accidents serve to further strengthen our resolve to eliminate all serious and fatal accidents, and not to mine if we cannot mine safely," said Gold Fields CEO Nick Holland.

"We are particularly saddened by these accidents as they come after a record 85 days without any fatal accidents on our South African mines. Over the past year, we have seen a significant improvement in our overall safety performance and with just six weeks to go in this financial year, we have seen our fatalities decline to 16 for the year to date, compared to a total of 47 for the previous year."

Thursday 21 May 2009

TAS: Company rejects widow's mine disaster claim

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Lawyers acting for the Beaconsfield Gold Mine in northern Tasmania are trying to have a compensation claim lodged by the family of a dead miner struck out.

Larry Knight's widow Jacqueline Stevenson is claiming damages for negligence and nervous shock resulting from her partner's

death in the Anzac Day rockfall three years ago.

A statement of claim filed last month says the mine should have placed wall restraints at the 925 metre level where Mr Knight was working, and failed to adequately assess the implications of an earlier rockfall at a lower level.

The mine rejects all the claims but also argues the case should be struck out because the statement names Beaconsfield Mine Joint Venture as the defendant rather than Beaconsfield Gold or Allstate Explorations.

The defence documents say Beaconsfield Mine Joint Venture is not a legal entity and as a result, is not capable of being sued.

This week in mining accident history

Date Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)
<p>2 May 1972</p> <p>Sunshine Mine, Kellogg, Idaho Underground metal mine</p> <p>Source: <i>Boise State University, Idaho</i></p>
Incident
<p>The Sunshine Mine is a silver mine located about 8 miles southeast of Kellogg, Shoshone County, Idaho.</p> <p>In May 1972, it was the site of one of the worst U.S. mining accidents, resulting in the deaths of 91 miners. At that time 178 miners were working in the mine.</p> <p>Summary of Disaster</p> <p>A fire of as yet undetermined origin was detected by Sunshine employees at approximately 11:35 a.m. on May 2, 1972. At that time, smoke and gas was coming from the 910 raise on the 3700 level. This fire precipitated the death of 91 underground employees by smoke inhalation and/or carbon monoxide poisoning. A subsequent shutdown of production of 7 months followed. Evacuation efforts at the time of the onset resulted in 81 men being evacuated the first day and 2 men being rescued 7 days later</p>

from the 4800 level.

Sunshine Mine remained open until February 16, 2001, producing 360 million troy ounces (11,000,000 kg) of silver.



The entrance to the mine via the Jewell Shaft. Statesman photo by David R. Frazier, taken May 2, 1972; Extract from Idaho Statesman.

As a result of the 1972 accident, every miner in the U.S. now carries a "self-rescuer" (a breathing apparatus made with hopcalite and much simpler than a SCBA), which gives the miner a chance to avoid death due to carbon monoxide poisoning.



Sunshine Mine survivors

The disaster is the subject of *The Sunshine Mine Disaster*, a book of poetry by James Brock combined with historical documents, and *The Deep Dark: Disaster and Redemption in America's Richest Silver Mine* by Gregg Olsen.

USA: Tri-Star Mining to pay \$105K fine for highwall failure

Extract from RP news wire, USA

The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) on May

20 announced that an administrative law judge of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission has approved a settlement between MSHA and Tri-Star Mining Inc. regarding an April 2007 highwall failure that resulted in the death of two coal miners at Tri-Star Mining's western Maryland surface operation. The mine operator will pay a total of \$105,324 in penalties.

As a result of its investigation into the accident, MSHA issued several violations, including three unwarrantable failures for violations that contributed to the highwall collapse. One was amended to a 104(a) citation with high negligence.

"No dollar amount can replace a human life," said Michael A. Davis, MSHA's deputy assistant secretary for operations.

"However, a penalty amount exceeding \$100,000 has been approved by the commission in this case. This penalty will serve notice to the mine operator that safety must always be the top priority."

USA: Truck driver dies at eastern Kentucky coal mine

Extract from Lexington Herald Leader, Kentucky, USA

JENKINS, Ky. -- A coal miner has died after the rock truck he was driving ran over an embankment at a refuse dump at an eastern Kentucky coal mine and overturned.

U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration spokeswoman Amy Louviere said the accident that killed 32-year-old Jeremy L. Steward of Jenkins happened about 8 a.m. EDT on Thursday in Letcher County. Louviere said federal mine inspectors are investigating.

The coal fatality is the second of the year in Kentucky and the sixth of the year in the United States. All have occurred at surface mines.

Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Cabinet spokesman Dick

Brown said the accident occurred at a mine operated by J & A Mining Inc. near Mayking.

Worker Killed In Accident at AngloGold's Tau Lekoa Mine-Union

Source: Dowjones Business news

JOHANNESBURG - A worker has been killed at AngloGold Ashanti Ltd.'s (AU) Tau Lekoa mine, bringing to four the number of mining fatalities in South Africa this week, a trade union said Thursday.

The accident at the mine near Klerksdorp, southwest of Johannesburg, occurred during the morning and involved two hoppers, Solidarity said in an e-mailed statement.

The incident follows the death of three mineworkers following two separate earth tremors Tuesday and Wednesday at Gold Fields Ltd.'s (GFI) Kloof mine, the union said.

Quote of the week

A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth.

Aesop

Friday 22 May 2009

Qld: Mine restarts after worker's death

BRISBANE - Work has resumed at Xstrata Zinc's George Fisher mine, in Mt Isa in north west Queensland, following the death of a worker on Tuesday.

The Department of Mines and Energy has given approval for underground mining operations to resume, according to Xstrata Zinc Mount Isa Executive General Manager Kevin Hendry.

The first crews returned to work this morning, he said.

"The safety of our employees remains our number one priority," Mr Hendry said.

"Xstrata Zinc is continuing to work closely with regulatory authorities to investigate the cause of this tragic accident."

The 50-year-old was operating heavy machinery in the mine when the incident occurred.

USA: Ky. high court clears way for mine death lawsuit

FRANKFORT, Ky. - The widow of a Kentucky coal miner who bled to death after his legs were cut off in a gruesome underground accident can proceed with a lawsuit against the company that employed him.

The Kentucky Supreme Court, in a unanimous ruling Thursday, gave Stella Morris of Cumberland the go-ahead to seek punitive damages from H & D Mining Inc.

The company had filed a motion to have the lawsuit dismissed. That motion was denied by the trial judge, the Kentucky Court of Appeals and now the Supreme Court.

David "Bud" Morris Jr., 29, bled to death in 2005 after being struck by a coal hauler, severing his legs just below the knees.

Monday 25 May 2009

NT: Mining giant fined for burns accident

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Rio Tinto Alcan has been fined \$185,000 for a workplace accident at a Northern Territory refinery that left a worker seriously injured in March last year.

Fred Rowe received burns to almost 25 per cent of his body after he slipped and fell into a pool of highly corrosive liquid at the refinery.

The Darwin Magistrates Court heard a safety walkway had been taken away for maintenance when the accident occurred.

The company pleaded guilty last week to breaching the Mining Management Act.



Fred Rowe received serious burns after falling into corrosive liquid.

The maximum penalty for such an offence is \$270,000, but Magistrate John Lowndes said he did not think that was high enough, considering the dangers inherent in mining.

He said in this case the fine would have been close to \$250,000, but the company was entitled to a discount due to its early guilty plea.

Outside court, the company issued a statement saying it was continuing to work with its employees, contractors and safety regulators to drive continual safety improvement at the Gove refinery.

It is the fifth time since 2006 that the refinery has been involved in a serious workplace accident, including two that proved fatal.

Tuesday 26 May 2009

China: 48 coal mine inspectors resign

Extract from China Daily, China

Forty-eight work safety inspectors have tendered their resignations over fears that they "cannot meet the tough rules" laid out for the coal-mining industry of Lianyuan city in Hunan province.

A member of the group told China Daily yesterday he had joined 47 other inspectors to submit a joint resignation letter to Lianyuan's coal industry administration, after

they found the penalties covering public accountability of the industry "too severe".

"The safety rules are extremely strict. It's hard to be 100 percent right all the time," said Zeng, a 50-year-old head of Doulishan township's work-safety station.

According to the new rules issued by authorities in Hunan in a bid to make the province's mines safer for workers, the heads of Lianyuan's township work-safety stations "will be sacked for any major incident that occurs under their charge".

"We have had sleepless nights, responding to alerts and heading to mines to check reported safety threats for decades," Zeng said.

But whenever an incident occurs, we are always the ones held responsible.

"To be fair, officials at the local and central administration should help each other and share the burden," he said.

The mass resignation comes close on the heels of escalated tensions over work safety in the region after a gas blast ripped through Lianyuan's Guaziyan colliery on Dec 17 last year, killing 18 people.

Two mine safety inspectors were removed from the posts shortly after.

An official from Lianyuan's local administration said most heads of the township stations who signed the joint resignation letter have "calmed down and returned to their jobs".

"The pressure they are under is tremendous and we have been trying to work out better ways to assist them," the director for general administration under Lianyuan's administration for the coal industry, surnamed Su, said.

Linfen, Shanxi province, another city hit by frequent coalmine accidents, has not had a mayor for the past six months.

In the past three years, Linfen has seen four mayors. The last mayor of the city, Liu Zhijie, was sacked last year on account of a mine accident that killed at least 270 people.

Former governor of Shanxi province, Meng Xuenong, was also removed over the same accident last September, while Meng's predecessor, Yu Youjun, had been removed from the post after a series of mine accidents.

There have also been concerns in Hunan's Lianyuan over the average wage of its mine safety inspectors, who, China Youth Daily said, earn about 1,200 yuan (\$175) a month, making them more vulnerable to bribes.

Sunday 31 May 2009

China: Death toll rises to 30 in Chongqing mine accident

Extract from China Daily, China

CHONGQING -- Death toll rose to 30 after five more bodies were recovered in a colliery gas burst Saturday in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, according to local coal mine safety authorities.



A rescuer emerges from an underground rescue operation after a gas leak at the Tonghua Coal Mine in Anwen Town of Qijiang County, Chongqing Municipality, China, May 30, 2009. The death toll has risen to 30. [Xinhua]

The accident happened around 11 a.m. at Tonghua Coal Mine in Anwen Town of Qijiang County, when 131 miners were working underground. One hundred and one miners were rescued.

Of the rescued, 59 miners were injured, including four in serious condition.



Scene of the accident. [Xinhua]

The cause of the accident is being investigated.

The Tonghua Coal Mine, with a history of more than 50 years, is affiliated to the state-owned Songzao Mining Bureau of Chongqing. The colliery's designed production capacity is 300,000 tonnes per year, which now has been expanded to 600,000 tonnes.

WA: Man killed in mining accident at Sino Iron project

Extract from WAtoday.com.au

A 34-year-old man was killed in a mining accident yesterday, bringing WA's tally of mine deaths in the past 12 months up to seven.

It is understood the man from the Philippines died just after 3am on Saturday morning after an accident involving machinery at Citic Pacific's Sino Iron project at Cape Preston.

All operations on the site, including construction work, have been halted.

Inspectors from the Department of Mines and Petroleum will travel to the scene tomorrow.

Monday 1 June 2009

China: Excessive explosives blamed for mine disaster

Extract from China Daily, China

Chongqing police Sunday detained three people after excessive explosives triggered a mine accident that left 30 dead and 77 injured.

"The State Council has set up a special investigation team to look into the explosion," said Liu Guangcai, deputy director of Chongqing Supervision and Management Administration of Work Safety, yesterday.

Detained were the mine owner, the project manager and a chief engineer, local government spokesman Wen Tianping said yesterday.

He also said two managers were relieved from their posts for investigation.



A nurse at Qijiang People's Hospital Sunday tends to Yang Shiping, one of the colliery workers seriously wounded in a gas explosion at Tonghua Coal Mine in Anwen town, Chongqing, on Saturday. The blast killed 30 people. [Photo by Liu Chan/China Daily]

The explosion occurred around 11 am on Saturday at Tonghua Coal Mine in Anwen town of Qijiang county, when 131 miners were working about 1,000 m underground.

Zhu Chuan, vice head of Qijiang, said yesterday the identities of the 30 victims had been verified and arrangements had been made for their family members to stay in 30 separate hostels.

"We arranged 30 teams of people to comfort them and provided 30 cars for their activities," Zhu said.

He made the remarks in response to earlier reports that family members were too emotional to control themselves while they were waiting for a list of the dead.

Of the 101 rescued miners, 77 injured had been sent to three local hospitals and one first-aid center.

Three miners remained in critical condition and seven were in serious condition, he said.

Zhao Tiechui, director of the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety, said yesterday that an excessive amount of explosives triggered the accident.

"Coal mine owners put the emphasis on accelerating construction instead of work safety," he told Xinhua News Agency.

Luo Lin, director of the State Administration of Work Safety, said the mine's owner and project manager failed to coordinate their efforts while technical changes were being made to the mine.

"It was a major safety accident caused by illegal mining practices," he was quoted by Xinhua News Agency yesterday.

He also condemned the fact the mine's managers didn't evacuate workers in time.

Wen Caijin, an official with the Chongqing Energy Investment Group, was quoted by chinanews.com.cn yesterday saying the company will observe regulations to give victims' families economic compensation.

The compensation would be at least 200,000 yuan (\$29,000) per victim, it reported, without revealing more information on how the compensation would be calculated.

The Tonghua Coal Mine, with a history of more than 50 years, is affiliated to the State-owned Songzao Mining Bureau of Chongqing. The colliery's designed production capacity is 300,000 tonnes per year, which has been doubled to 600,000 tonnes

Tuesday 2 June 2009

Death toll at South African gold mine rises to 61

Sourced from Reuters, USA

JOHANNESBURG, - The death toll rose to at least 61 on Tuesday from an underground fire that killed illegal miners at a disused gold mine in South Africa, Harmony Gold Mining Co. said.

"Today we found 25 more bodies," said Tom Smith, head of Harmony's operations in the part of the country where the abandoned shaft is located. "The bodies are not burnt. It seems more of a case of gas or smoke inhalation.

Illegal mining in South Africa's abandoned gold mines often goes unnoticed because miners can sneak past security at one mine and exit from one owned by a different company kilometres away. The illegal miners can stay underground for months unseen.

Gold prices near record highs have made the risk taken by well-organised illegal mining syndicates even more worthwhile.

Harmony, the world's No. 5 gold producer, is particularly exposed to plundering by illegal miners compared with its peers, because it was built on a strategy of buying old, unwanted gold shafts and mines.

Smith said the bodies were retrieved by fellow illegal miners from depths of up to 1.4 km (0.9 miles).

He said he didn't know how the fire had started, and reiterated that it was too dangerous for Harmony to send its staff to search for bodies.

"I don't know if there are any more bodies down there, we just have to wait," he said.

The illegal miners were killed in a fire over the weekend at Harmony's Eland shaft, located in the central Free State. A similar fire at its marginal St. Helena mine in the

same province killed 23 illegal miners in 2007.

The Department of Mining, which is grappling with an escalating safety crisis in South Africa's mining sector, has said dealing with illegal miners was difficult because it lacked enough staff to inspect producing mines, let alone disused ones. Illegal miners are also usually armed.

South Africa's Chamber of Mines, which groups gold producers in the world's third biggest source of gold, said illegal mining was a problem that individual companies were dealing with, but it had no figures on the value of gold stolen.

Police have conducted sporadic sting operations to arrest the illegal miners, but mine owners say catching thieves was difficult in the labyrinth of mines.

Minister of Mining Susan Shabangu expressed condolences for the deaths at the Harmony mine, and promised to visit the site of the deaths on Tuesday.

South Africa: Authorities ignore illegal mine disaster

Extract from The Times Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa

How emergency services and mine bosses turned a blind eye as 61 pirate miners died underground

DESPERATE illegal miners have been left to dig up their dead without assistance from the police, emergency services or mine bosses — who knew about the underground disaster, which claimed 61 lives, days before it was reported.

An inferno deep below the surface last week at Harmony Gold's disused Eland mine, in Welkom, killed the illegal miners, who are known as zama-zamas.

Free State police spokesman Superintendent Motantsi Makhele said that

the mine did not tell the police of the disaster until Sunday.

But Harmony Gold was asked to supply body bags for the dead miners days before the incident was reported to the authorities.

Graham Briggs, chief executive officer of Harmony Gold, confirmed that the "criminal miners" had asked the company for 40 body bags as far back as Friday night.

"The first request [for body bags] came several days ago. I think it was Saturday, but it might have been Friday evening," said Briggs.

The company could give the miners only 18 body bags.

Since then, the zama-zamas have repeatedly returned to the disused 1400m-deep shaft — deemed too dangerous for the police and mine rescue workers to enter — to recover the bodies of their fellows, killed, it is believed, by smoke inhalation.

Bodies have been piling up at mortuaries for identification by family members.

Neither Harmony Gold nor the authorities have taken part in recovering the bodies.

Briggs said Harmony Gold had done its best to ensure that its disused mine shafts were secured — but it was unable to assist the zama-zamas.

"The mine is dangerous. It last operated about five years ago," he said.

An officer of Welkom emergency services, who asked not to be named, said his men were not involved in the recovery of bodies.

"The mines should have their own guys to do it," he said.

"We are not involved there at all."

But National Union of Mineworkers spokesman Lesiba Seshoka said: "The blame should lie squarely on the shoulders of Harmony Gold.

"It is out of order that people from outside can get access to internal operations.

"If [Harmony Gold] are serious about security in general, it won't allow the mine to become a death trap ... this would not have happened."

A security guard at the mine told The Times that the zama- zamas pay bribes of up to R1000 each to gain access to the deadly shafts.

Once they are inside, they find their way to the disused mine shafts and disappear underground for weeks, resurfacing only when they need supplies.

Briggs said 294 illegal miners had been arrested in recent weeks. He said Harmony was investigating an incident in which illegal miners allegedly paid a R22000 bribe to security staff to allow them access to the mine.

Some of those arrested are retired or former miners who had worked for the company, he added.

Hendrik Schmidt, the DA's shadow minister of mining, said: "This tragic loss of life demonstrates both the desperate nature of the poverty facing many South Africans, and the urgent need for mining companies and [the government] to work in tandem on improving the safety records of our mines, particularly by properly cordoning off and guarding abandoned mining areas. "

A Welkom police officer said many of the miners are from Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland.

Superintendent Makhele said the death toll could rise.

"We really can't say and can only see if more bodies are brought out," he said.

Staff at the Ernest Oppenheimer, StHelena and Bongani hospitals, in Welkom, said they had admitted no casualties injured in the underground fire.

Wednesday 3 June 2009

India: Truck driver dies while unloading ore

Extract from The Times of India

PANAJI: A truck driver suffered a cardiac arrest in an accident while offloading ore in the morning near a screening plant outside a mining site at Shirgao on Tuesday.

Identified as Manohar Vaigankar, the driver was rushed to Goa Medical College, Bambolim but apparently died of shock during the accident near an iron ore mine belonging to Chowgule and Company.



[Iron ore mine at Shirago, India](#)

A company official said that the accident occurred while the loaded tipper was unloading the material at the ground near the screening plant at Shirgao mines. "It is outside the mining area and 300 m away from its boundary," R N Shetty, director of mines, Chowgule and Company said.

He said the company will initiate an inquiry into the mishap as to how the cabin along with the driver got lifted and later came down to its original position while tipping the ore. "As per our preliminary report, the driver was looking backwards through the rear window when the cabin went up and came down," Shetty said.

Sub Divisional Police Officer, Bicholim, Bosuet D'Silva said that the police received the information about the driver's death from Goa Medical College, where he had been rushed for treatment. No panchanama was conducted at the site.

The post-mortem report revealed that coronary occlusive disease leading to myocardial isochemia' (cardiac arrest) was the cause of the driver's death, D'Silva said. The truck was unloading wet ore when the mishap occurred. "There are no physical injuries as per the post-mortem report, and there is nothing suspicious," D'Silva added.

While tipping, the rear portion lifts up but the cabin remains safely in its position. But a mishap can occur if the unloading operation is done in a hurry, sources said.

In another accident recently at the same site, a truck had fallen down into a mining pit "It was due to overspeeding in mine premises and is being investigated by director of mines bureau and safety," Shetty told TOI.

USA: Could Daylight Savings Time Lead to More Injuries?

Extract Safety.BLR.com, Old Saybrook, CT, USA

Michigan State University scientists say the number of workplace accidents spikes after the switch to Daylight Savings Time every March. Using data from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), they identified a 5.7 percent increase in workplace injuries and nearly 68 percent more days lost to injuries after the switch.



"Are you just back from work or on your way to the office?"

They say the accidents are related to an average sleep loss of 40 minutes for American workers due to the time change.

Their findings are to be published in the September issue of the Journal of Applied Psychology.

The researchers found no increase in workplace accidents or sleep loss when clocks are set back an hour in November.

One hour is enough to cause problems, especially for those whose work requires a high level of attention to detail, they maintain.

Thursday 4 June 2009

Qld to get Mine safety commissioner

Extract from ABC News, Online, Aus

Queensland Parliament has passed laws creating a new position for a Mine Safety and Health Commissioner.

The State Opposition supported the changes, which stem from last year's Ombudsman's report on the Queensland Mines Inspectorate.

Mines and Energy Minister Stephen Robertson told the House it will also be illegal to harass anyone who provides information about safety breaches.

"It is especially important that where it is necessary for individuals to report unsafe or illegal practices, they can do so without the fear of retribution or victimisation," he said.

"Individuals should not be penalised for doing the right thing, especially when doing so can prevent serious injury or even the loss of a life."

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

R

riffles/ripples A set of bars or slats placed in the bottom of a sluice box, in long-toms and cradles, or separation tables to capture heavy minerals washed across them.

- Ed.