

Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR)	2008 CONFERENCE OF CHIEF INSPECTORS OF MINES — a Subcommittee of MCMPR
	Adelaide, South Australia 20-24 October 2008

COMMUNIQUE

The 50th annual Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines (CCIM) was held in Adelaide from 20-24 October 2008. The conference was hosted by Primary Industries and Resources South Australia and SafeWork SA, chaired by Mr Fred Sears (Tasmania) with representation from all States, the Commonwealth and New Zealand. The Hon Clive Brown, Chair of the National Mine Safety Framework Steering Group, participated in the first plenary session of the conference by a teleconference link.

Pre-conference

Prior to the conference, the Chief Inspectors visited three mines in the central region of South Australia. This provided interesting information on the following;

- safety systems and performance,
- medical care and emergency preparedness,
- residential and fly-in fly-out operations,
- shift and travel arrangements,
- amenities at site,
- community involvement,
- recruitment of local and indigenous people from the region and associated training programs.

Olympic Dam

BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam underground copper-gold-uranium mine, about 600km north of Adelaide currently has an annual copper production of 180 ktpa following a major expansion completed in 2000. If plans for an expansion to become an open cut operation proceed, copper production will increase to over 700 ktpa with Olympic Dam likely to become Australia's largest mine. Discussions with Barry Mitchell, Vice President, Mining provided the Chief Inspectors with an overview of the company's resources, mining operations and safety management.

Prominent Hill

A visit to OZ Mineral's Prominent Hill copper-gold mine, now two years under construction, followed. An introduction was given by Mick Wilkes, General Manager. Trevor McIlwaine, Mine Manager at Prominent Hill conducted a tour of the new mine with production expected at 110 ktpa copper and 75 kozpa gold. The tour started with an inspection of the pit from an automated wall stability monitoring site. This was followed by viewing the soon to be commissioned processing plant. Full production is expected to commence early in 2009.

Beverley

At Heathgate's Beverley uranium mine, Gary Birch, General Manager showed the inspectors a very different mine. Beverley is an in situ recovery operation which is largely a water pumping exercise with the soluble mineral removed from the water by ion exchange at the processing plant. The Chief Inspectors noted the high standard of house keeping around the plant and the site in general.

The Chief Inspectors appreciated the time given by operational staff to outline safety, health and environmental initiatives and programs. Visits of this nature provide the CCIM with a collective opportunity each year to interact with site personnel and to exchange experiences within jurisdictions. These have become a valued and informative part of the Conference process.

Conference

National Mine Safety Framework

The Hon Clive Brown (Chair NMSF Steering Group) gave an overview of the status of the NMSF and the plan going forward. The NMSF tripartite Steering Group was established at the request of the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR), and met for the first time in July 2006. Implementation recommendations have been developed by the Steering Committee for each strategy (Legislation, Consultation, Data, Competency, Compliance, Enforcement and Research) through Working Groups and feedback from public consultation. The recommendations will be delivered to the next meeting of MCMPR. The MCMPR will consider endorsing these to COAG and a response is expected by early next year.

As a result of these discussions a number of matters were identified by members of the CCIM which the Chair of the NMSF Steering Committee undertook to raise with the NMSF Secretariat.

Competencies for Inspectors

The CCIM discussed current issues and practices in each jurisdiction for developing and maintaining consistent standards for mines inspectors. Formal courses augment specialist relevant skills the inspectors bring to the job such as mining, mechanical and electrical engineering, geotechnical, etc. General skills that inspectors require in addition to technical were discussed and include; legislative, investigative, safety and mine management. The CCIM agreed to adopt the Diploma of Government (Workplace Inspection) and was of the view that it could provide a valuable base line for the NMSF strategy relating to non-technical competencies for inspectors.

Statutory Mine Positions

Mr William Short (Senior OH&S Inspector - Mining (SafeWork SA)) gave a presentation on *Competencies for Safety Critical Positions in the Mining Industry*. This covered detail for the positions of Underground Mine Manager, Underground Mine Supervisor, Quarry Manager and Shotfirer (Surface & Underground) which were put forward for the NMSF Competencies Working Group to consider. The CCIM compared jurisdictions with regard to specified competencies and minimum standards. It was noted that some jurisdictions choose not specify statutory positions arguing specific competencies need not be tied to positions.

Competency Standards Generally

CCIM has agreed on the importance of national competencies to ensure that people can work safely across jurisdictions. Reviews of national competencies through the SkillsDMC were discussed including participation in this process by each jurisdiction.

Safety Performance

The Conference reviewed fatalities and major/significant incidents in each jurisdiction over the last 12 months. This is a key and valued opportunity that the CCIM annual conference provides.

Significant Incidents Reports

The Conference agreed to adopt a model format for the timely reporting and dissemination of safety alert advice which will be compatible with the MIRMgate web site data base. The objective is to provide the industry with early standardised information to prevent recurrence of similar incidents.

Registered Training Organisations

The CCIM discussed concerns as to the quality and consistency of training delivered to the industry. CCIM recommends that an effective auditing system be set up to ensure that RTOs deliver quality competency outcomes.

Continuing Professional Development

A study by NSW found that no jurisdiction had a system to ensure the maintenance of mining competency. The CCIM supports the furtherance of continuing professional development relating to mining competencies.

Health Management Plans at sites

NSW presented information on the work undertaken by the NSW Mining Industry Health Working Party. The *“Guide to the development and implementation of health management plans”* is expected to be released for public comment in late 2008.

Administration and Legislation

Conference received briefings on changes in administration and management within jurisdictions. These will be updated on the CCIM website as they become available.

Website

The Chief Inspectors noted a revision of the CCIM website is to be undertaken shortly and updates on the development and implementation of the NMSF will be accessible via links from the site.

CCIM 2009

The 51st Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines is scheduled to be held in New Zealand in late 2009.

Fred Sears
Chair, CCIM 2008
October 2008



CCIM attendees, October 2008

Left to right: Greg Marshall (SA), Keith Porritt (Cwlth), Roger Billingham (Qld), Rod Morrison (NSW), Kevin Poynter (NZ), Simon Ridge (SA), Graeme Beven (NT), Fred Sears (Tas), Rob Regan (NSW), Gavin Taylor (Qld), Martin Knee (WA), John Mitas (Vic), Tim Gosling (Vic).