

2010 CONFERENCE OF CHIEF INSPECTORS OF MINES

Melbourne, Victoria

18-22 October 2010

COMMUNIQUE

The 52nd annual Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines (CCIM) was held in Melbourne from 18-22 October 2010. The conference was hosted by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries and WorkSafe Victoria, chaired by Mr Simon Ridge (Western Australia) with representation from all States, the Commonwealth, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

Pre-conference

Prior to the conference, the Chief Inspectors visited four mines to the west of Melbourne. This provided relevant information on the following;

- mine and plant safety management,
- impacts of urban encroachment,
- community engagement,
- mine site rehabilitation, and
- environmental management.

Boral Cement Waurin Ponds

Boral's Waurin Ponds limestone quarry and cement works, about 60km southwest of Melbourne was established in 1968 and currently has an annual cement production of around 700,000 tonne per year from both an old and a recently commissioned pit. An overview was given by Peter Richardson, Operations Manager and a detailed presentation on the challenges facing the facility was given by Brian McGrath, Technical Manager. An excellent guided tour of the facility was given by Alex Walker, Quarry Manager.

The encroachment of large scale urban development and the siting between quarry pits of a freeway with a dual service stop were examples of challenges faced by the mine. With energy representing 35% of variable costs, alternative fuels to gas such as old tyres, tallow, bilge oil and a variety of industrial by-products are used. Research into consuming a large resource of biosolids stockpiled by Melbourne Water since 1897 and also into consuming shredded solid waste (plastic, paper, textile and timber) to be diverted from landfill illustrated the 'industrial ecology' value served to the community by the cement works.

Anglesea brown coalmine and power station

A tour by Chris Rolland, Mine Manager of Alcoa's opencast brown coal mine and power station, located north of the seaside holiday village of Anglesea, followed. The 160 megawatt power station began generation in 1969 and is used to supply 41% of the power needs for Alcoa's Point Henry aluminium smelter. The 1.1Mtpa mine has 80 years of reserves and is nestled in the southeast corner of a 7721Ha lease. 6600Ha is managed in a joint venture between Alcoa and Parks Victoria as the Anglesea Heath where poor soils and coastal climate give rise to significant biodiversity. Community consultation, rehabilitation and many years since the last lost work day were discussed.

Castlemaine Goldfields' Ballarat mine

Matthew Gill, the newly appointed CEO of the company, welcomed the CCIM to the site and gave members an overview of the future of the operation. Currently the mine is under care and maintenance with exploration drilling underway. Kurtis Noyce, Senior Sustainability Officer outlined two case histories demonstrating a sophisticated level of community engagement. These were the construction of the Golden Point ventilation shaft and the Woolshed Gully 745 Intersection collapse and recovery. Some simple but

effective solutions to community issues were described, for example the sending of an SMS text message including landline voice translation to 20 affected residents 5 minutes prior to blasting was found to work best for community satisfaction. Tim Hewitt, Underground Manager, provided a tour underground including exploration drilling in the Suleiman Decline.

Sovereign Hill Tourist Mine, Ballarat

The Chief Inspectors had a discussion with John Lewis, Operations Manager, in relation to the challenges faced with construction of and public access to the historical underground workings. The Chief Inspectors then carried out an underground visit, to gain an appreciation of the underground environment. It was also noted that about half a million tourists visit the site each year.

At all four mines the Chief Inspectors appreciated the time given by operational staff to outline safety, current challenges, community 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 National Mine Safety Framework (NMSF) Steering Group Secretariat, presented an update of the implementation of the NMSF. A set of “core” Drafting Instructions was endorsed by Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR) on 28 May 2010, and would form the basis of mining regulations under the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act. A “non-core” process has also been established to deliver consistency in the additional mine safety provisions required by New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. The outcome of a request for tender for the National Mine Safety Database will be delivered to SCO in February/March 2011. A National Regulators Forum is planned for October/November 2011 with a focus on the legislative changes resulting from the NMSF and model WHS legislation, which should be largely finalised by this time. Subsequent jurisdictional workshops to ensure the training could be delivered to as many inspectors as practicable are anticipated. The CCIM should have a significant role in the organisation of the forum.

Change in governance

CCIM will no longer come under the auspices of MCMPR. CCIM members will continue ongoing dialogue, contact and sharing of solutions as an independently convened body. The CCIM, as a peak body for mining regulators, has proved to be an effective tool to share learning and develop consistency in the spirit of harmonisation.

Inspector training initiatives

The CCIM reviewed inspector training initiatives in each jurisdiction and agreed on a process to share training information.

Codes of Practice

The Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre (MISHC) Compliance Gate project (facilitated by the NMSF) is aimed at making the full range of documents such as Regulation, Codes of Practice and Guidance Notes readily discoverable. Availability of related documents from various states is expected to lead in time to better standardisation.

The CCIM agreed to continue to work towards standardised guidance material. A pilot project was agreed to use staff as available to review, prioritise and prepare an assessment and categorisation of available standards for some initial selected mining activities.

Competency Certification Options

The conference noted the issues related to the transition to a tri-state (QLD, NSW, WA) competency certification system. Namely that individual state certification processes and mutual recognition need fill the gap until each National Certification of Competency is progressed to the point of being available for issue.

National Mine Safety Handbook

NSW provided an update on the progress of the National Mine Safety Handbook as a PDF. The Handbook is planned to be rolled out to the whole of industry in late 2011 as a key reference provided by the CCIM and constitute a valued input to industry to improve the performance of occupational health and safety.

Website

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

CCIM 2011

The 53rd Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines is currently scheduled to be held in the Darwin in September 2011, subject to confirmation in early 2011.

Simon Ridge
Chair, CCIM 2010
October 2010



CCIM attendees, October 2010 (Left to right)

Top: Doug Sceney (Vic), Johan Booyse (NZ), John Mitas (Vic), Melissa Round (Cwlth),
Rob Regan (NSW), Robert O'Sullivan (Qld), CS Wong (SA), Keith Porritt (Cwlth)
Bottom: Fred Sears (Tas), Greg Marshall (SA), Simon Ridge (WA), Gavin Taylor (Qld),
Tim Gosling (Vic), Kee Hah (NT)