

Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR)	2005 CONFERENCE OF CHIEF INSPECTORS OF MINES — a Subcommittee of MCMPR Sydney, NSW 14-16 September 2005
---	--

COMMUNIQUE

The 47th annual Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines (CCIM) was held in Sydney from 14-16 September 2005. The conference was hosted by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and chaired by Mr Greg Marshall, Chief Inspector of Mines, South Australia, with representation from all States (except Tasmania), Northern Territory, Commonwealth, and observers from New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

Pre-conference

Before the conference, the Chief Inspectors visited Rio Tinto's Northparkes Mines and Newcrest Mining's Cadia Valley Operations in central New South Wales. Both mines are centred on disseminated and veined copper-gold deposits within intrusive host rocks.

Northparkes

At Northparkes, the Chief Inspectors toured the underground operations and were given an overview of mine's block caving mining method. The Chief Inspectors received an extensive briefing on the hazard created by energy release in the context of the 1999 airblast event at the mine, and the Major Hazard Risk Management process developed by the company in response. They also received a presentation on research and development of automated load-haul-dump mining equipment, and had an opportunity to look closely at a prototype unit and its 'light-curtain' safety-shutdown system currently being trailed.

Cadia

Cadia Valley Operations, located 25km southwest of Orange, is comprised of the Cadia Hill open cut, the Ridgeway underground mine, and a shared ore treatment facility. Cadia East, a potentially significant extension of the deposit, is in the early stages of underground exploration. The Chief Inspectors toured both the underground and open cut operations and the concentrator, which utilises one of the largest grinding mills in the world to treat over 22 million tonnes of ore per annum.

At both mines, the Chief Inspectors gained an excellent appreciation of the policies and programs devoted to managing the safety and health of employees. Mr Barry Lavin (Managing Director, Northparkes) and Mr Tim Lehany (General Manager, Cadia Valley Operations) and staff gave generously of their time and hospitality to make the visits most informative and memorable. The Chief Inspectors thank all involved.

Conference

Safety Performance

Conference reviewed circumstances involving fatalities and high potential or major/significant incidents in each jurisdiction over the last 12 months. Final statistics and data for the period will be reported by each State and the Northern Territory via websites or published reports.

Conference agreed on the development of a template for the timely reporting and dissemination of safety alert advice in a risk management format, which would be compatible with the Mineral Industry Risk Management Gateway (MIRMgate) website database.

National Mine Safety Framework (NMSF)

The Chief Inspectors noted the outcomes of a seminar on mine safety convened in Adelaide by the Ministerial Council's Standing Committee of Officials in June 2005. Representatives of mining industry groups, employees and government agencies participated. The seminar had reviewed progress with development of the NMSF strategies and discussed possible impact on the Framework of reviews of mine safety operations and administrative structures in a number of jurisdictions. Options for enhancing the level of consultation with stakeholders, resources devoted to its implementation, and hence the pace of implementation had been discussed. These matters and possible models for incorporating them into an enhanced NMSF implementation strategy are to be considered by the Ministerial Council.

Against this background, the likely short-term impact on the Chief Inspectors' NMSF work programs was discussed at length with officers from the Commonwealth Government at the conference. Chief Inspectors agreed that, in light of these most useful discussions, they should continue their current work towards developing the NMSF strategies, bearing in mind particularly the opportunities for wider collaboration with all stakeholders in this process. Discussion on more strategic issues relating to NMSF enhancement would be a matter for discussion at Ministerial and Standing Committee level, informed by Chief Inspectors' assessment of the relative merits of possible alternative models.

Conference reviewed progress towards implementation of the seven strategies, noting that three of the strategies had reached a stage where consultation on final measures could begin. Members agreed that as each of the measures matured it would be publicised through the CCIM's website.

Competency Standards for Mines Inspectors

Conference addressed matters relating to consistent standards for mines inspectors. Current competency programs are to be reviewed in preparation for more detailed discussion at the 2006 conference. In the meantime, it was agreed that information on the subject would be disseminated between jurisdictions.

Jurisdictional Reviews

Conference received reports on the findings of reviews on the approach to mine safety regulation or its administration in three jurisdictions (NSW, Qld and WA). It was noted that in Western Australia an additional \$1 million had been provided by the Government to improve regulation of the resource and dangerous goods industries. Western Australia's State Mining Engineer informed the conference that while a feasibility study was being conducted into establishing a new safety authority for the industries, the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection would be responsible for administering the relevant legislation, including the Mine Safety Inspection and the Dangerous Goods Act.

Administration and Legislation

Conference received briefings on changes in administration and management within jurisdictions, noting particularly the changes in Western Australia effective from 1 July 2005, details of which are available on the Links page of the CCIM's website.

Website

A report by Geoscience Australia on the recent upgrade of the CCIM's website was discussed. The Chief Inspectors noted the establishment of a separate NMSF web page and proposal to have a 'What's New' link on the Home page, which would facilitate navigation to updates on the development and implementation of Framework strategies as they are posted on the site.

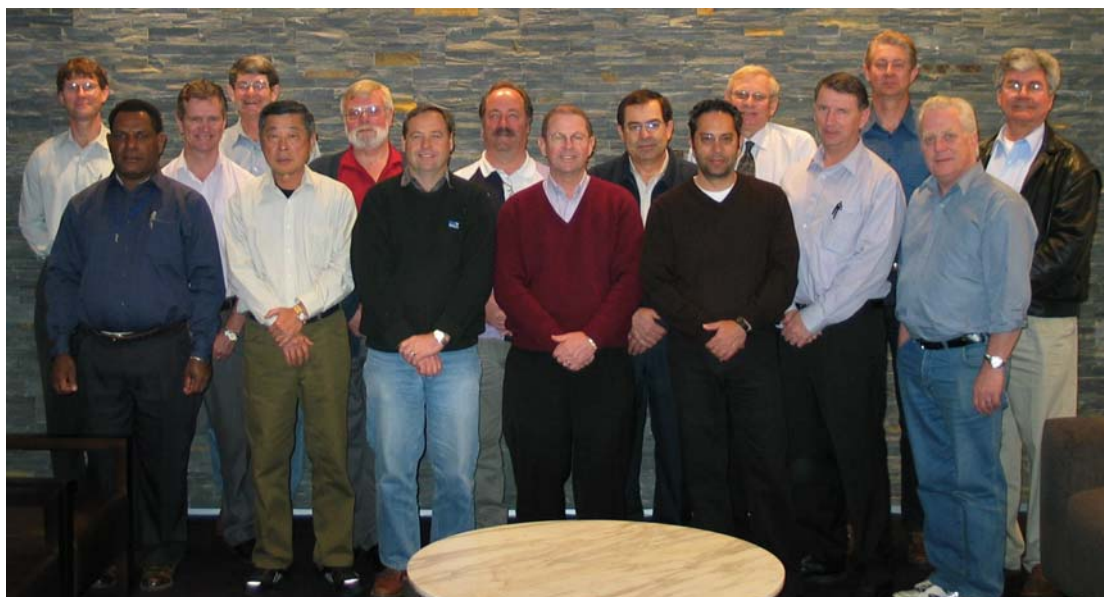
Presentations

Professor Jim Joy, Director of the Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre, University of Queensland and Mr Graham Terry, Minerals Industry Cooperative Industry (MICI) Advisor made invited presentations at the conference. MICI was established in 2003 as a combined effort from minerals industry representatives to reduce accident rates within mining.

MICI is currently supported by the Minerals Council of Australia and is underpinned by a number of projects and industry resources. The direction of MICI is to be reviewed in late 2005. Professor Joy's presentation addressed the *Status of MICI and the Potential Way Forward*, and Mr Terry's presentation the NMSF under the title of a *Review of "analysis of need" from an industry project (MICI) perspective*.

CCIM 2006

The 48th Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines is scheduled to be held in Tasmania around late October 2006.



CCIM representatives, September 2005

Left to right: Greg Marshall (SA), Howard Lole (PNG), John Norcott (NSW), Roger Billingham (Qld), Kee Hah (NT), Martin Knee (WA), Colin Thornton (Vic), Bill Taylor (NZ), Tim Gosling (NT), John Mitas (Vic), Bill Loizides (SA), Rod Morrison (NSW), Bill McKay (Com), Rob Regan (NSW), Denis Hally-Burton (Advisor), Brian Lyne (Qld).

Bill McKay

for

Greg Marshall
Chair, CCIM 2005
Chief Inspector of Mines
South Australia
September 2005