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| Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR) | 2009 CONFERENCE OF CHIEF INSPECTORS OF MINES — a Subcommittee of MCMPR Rotorua, New Zealand 19-23 October 2009 |
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COMMUNIQUE

The 51st annual Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines (CCIM) was held in Rotorua from 19-23 October 2009. The conference was hosted by the Department of Labour New Zealand, chaired by Mr Greg Marshall (South Australia) with representation from all jurisdictions (except Tasmania and the Northern Territory), the Commonwealth, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

Pre-conference

Prior to the conference, the Chief Inspectors visited two mines in the central region of the North Island of New Zealand. This provided relevant information on the following;

- mine safety management,
- community engagement,
- mine site rehabilitation,
- local government regulatory focus,
- varied impacts of earlier mine workings,
- environmental management, and
- exploration.

Waihi gold mine

Newmont's Waihi gold mine, about 100km southeast of Auckland currently has an annual gold production of around 150,000oz per year from the Favona underground operation opened in 2002 and the 130 year old Martha mine, which is now open cut. An overview was given by Glen Grinlay, General Manager and a tour was provided by mining staff. The rich history of mining in the area was highlighted by the oral history presented by Doreen McLeod's filmed excerpts from old timers. The example of the 'milking cow', a stope that continued to deliver ore at 200t/day for 25 years and eventually broke through to the surface characterised the challenging ground conditions. The current day impacts of historical workings were portrayed by the collapse of a house into the old workings, the need to relocate the Cornish pump house and the disintegration of a tyre bund pit wall.

Rotowaro coal mine

A visit to Solid Energy's Rotowaro opencast coal mine, located 10 km west of Huntly township, followed. An introduction was given by Craig Smith, General Manager, which provided the context of coal mining in New Zealand. A tour of the opencast was conducted by Paul Nieuwoudt, Contracts Manager, Mark Paris, Operations Manager and others. Solid Energy, a State Owned Enterprise produces 1.3Mt of sub-bituminous product from Rotowaro to supply New Zealand's only coal fired power station at nearby Huntly and an iron sands smelter at Glenbrook, south of Auckland. The tour started with an inspection of the 180m deep Awaroa 4 pit. This was followed by viewing rehabilitation including stream relocation, tailings storage and coal sorting and despatch.

The Chief Inspectors appreciated the time generously given by operational staff to outline safety, 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 (Melissa Round), presented an update of the implementation of the NMSF. The NMSF Steering Group delivered its recommendations on the implementation of the seven NMSF strategies to MCMPR in October 2008 in the NMSF Implementation Report. The Report was endorsed by MCMPR in October 2008 and by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in April 2009.

The NMSF Steering Group has commenced a number of implementation activities, including the development of a MIRMgate portal to facilitate access to compliance material for duty holders; development of consistent enforcement guidelines; investigation of technical requirements for a National Mine Safety Database; and the completion of an Independent Capability Analysis of Australian Mining Inspectorates. A significant number of CCIM members are involved in the NMSF Steering and Working Groups.

Relationship with Model OHS legislation

The NMSF Steering Group has agreed that the outcomes of the NMSF process will be consistent with the Model OHS Act, and is focusing its attention on the mining-specific issues that will not be addressed in the Model OHS Act.

In terms of the legislative instrument(s) used to implement the NMSF, the Steering Group's view is that flexibility should be maintained, with decisions on the instrument(s) left to state and territory governments. Although a number of jurisdictions will choose to implement through regulations under the Model OHS Act, jurisdictions will also be able to retain separate mine safety legislation.

Regulator Competency Report and Proposed Regulator Forum

The CCIM discussed the completed Inspectorate Capability Analysis and the proposed Regulators Forum. The Regulators Forum will be utilised as part of both the regulator competency and enforcement strategies of the NMSF. The Conference agreed that participants in the Regulators Forum will need to include inspectors representing each sector and professional area within jurisdictions; and that the agenda developed for the forum must be useful for all attendees. The CCIM also agreed that the NMSF Steering Group should be advised that the Industry Duty Holders Competency component of the Competency Support strategy should be progressed as a priority.

Safety Performance

The CCIM discussed in camera all fatalities and significant incidents in the mining industry and expressed concern with the number of fatalities and the high incidence of interaction between mobile plant and workers. Jurisdictions are encouraging the utilisation of modern technology and enhanced non-technical skills to improve safety performance in this area.

Significant Incident 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, and approaches to influence better outcomes.

Continuing Professional Development

The CCIM supports the implementation of continuing professional development systems relating to mining competencies.

National Mine Safety Handbook

An update of the National Mine Safety Handbook is being undertaken by NSW. So far it has been converted from PDF to a word document and set up with an automatic 'table of contents' down to the 7th level heading to facilitate searching. Jurisdictions are to provide comments back to NSW regarding the current handbook and the update report provided to the CCIM 2009.

Mutual recognition of mine officials

Members noted the development of a revision of the Federal mutual recognition legislation requiring complementary state and territory legislation. A Ministerial declaration relating to shot firers was gazetted by the Commonwealth in October this year.

CCIM OHS Initiatives

NSW has initiated a change program which has been designed to address long term concerns in the industry and provide a way forward to improve the culture in the industry. One outcome will be a series of guidelines in a common format using simple language now available on their website. These include the following reports;

- 'Fatigue Management Plan',
- 'Health Management Plan',
- 'Guide to the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders',
- 'Capacity Building Towards a World Leading OHS Culture' and
- 'A Tool to review Safety Incentive Schemes'.

Sharing of this important work is a good example interstate co-operation and developing consistency of approach to OHS in line with the intention of the National Mine Safety Framework.

Vic has produced guidance on the management of drugs and alcohol in mines, available on the WorkSafe Victoria website.

Qld has also produced a revised Recognised Standard on drugs and alcohol for coal mines.

Standards Australia

In relation to a new Standards Australia business model, potential ramifications were noted for the drafting of mining safety legislation with respect to possible references to specific standards.

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 2010

The 52nd Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines is scheduled to be held in Victoria in October 2010.

Greg Marshall
Chair, CCIM 2009
October 2009



CCIM attendees, October 2009

Left to right: Rob Regan (NSW), Roger Billingham (Qld), Mark Stephens (NSW), Greg Marshall (SA), Johan Booyse (NZ), Kevin Poynter (NZ), Melissa Round (Cwlth), Keith Porritt (Cwlth), Simon Ridge (WA), Gavin Taylor (Qld), Tim Gosling (Vic), John Mitas (Vic), Michael Firmin (NZ), Rod Morrison (NSW), Lave Michael (PNG), Lucky Munro (NZ)