

## 2011 CONFERENCE OF CHIEF INSPECTORS OF MINES

Darwin, Northern Territory

4-9 September 2011

### COMMUNIQUE

The 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines (CCIM) was held in Darwin from 4-9 September 2011. The conference was hosted by NT WorkSafe and the Northern Territory Department of Resources, chaired by Mr John Mitas (Victoria) with representation from most States, the Commonwealth and Papua New Guinea.

#### Pre-conference

Prior to the conference, members of CCIM visited two mines to the south and east of Darwin. This provided relevant information on;

- mine and plant safety management,
- staff shift regimes and fatigue issues,
- impacts of the exceptional rain events in recent years,
- whole of mine life planning, and
- environmental management.

#### *Crocodile Gold Cosmo mine*

Crocodile Gold's Cosmo gold mine, about 150km southeast of Darwin produced 82,000 ounces of gold in 2010 from open cut operations. The Cosmo underground operation is being developed by a decline. An overview was given by Joe Ranford, General Manager NT Operations and a detailed presentation and excellent guided tour of the facility and decline was given by Terry Carr, Mine Manager Underground. The underground operation will provide high grade mill feed to supplement lower grade open cut ore. It will utilise a modified Avoca stoping method leaving some pillars to access the Cosmo deeps below the pit with a planned 40m crown pillar. The mine experienced a big wet last year. Dewatering of the pit via a half meter 12km pipeline to other pits is nearly complete.

#### *Energy Resources of Australia Ranger uranium mine*

CCIM then visited the Ranger uranium mine about 250km east of Darwin. A viewing of Pit 3 was conducted by Dave Meador, a Senior Supervisor at the mine. Pit 3 at Ranger also had de-watering nearing completion following exceptional rain events in prior years. Pit 3 mining is due to be completed by 2012 and will be back filled with tailings. Shane Reeves, Manager Plant Operations provided a tour of the processing plant where a recently developed crusher to deal with stockpiled lateritic ore averaging 0.25% U<sub>3</sub>O<sub>8</sub> had performed better than planned producing 50t of U<sub>3</sub>O<sub>8</sub> in 2010 out of a total mine production of 350t U<sub>3</sub>O<sub>8</sub>. The final processing to approximately 99% U<sub>3</sub>O<sub>8</sub> requires ammonia. Presentations were provided by Todd Simms, HSE Manager and Jody Clark, Water and Tailings Manager. Jody Clark focussed on water management including a \$220M proposal to boil off excess processing water at a cost of around \$10-20M per year.

The CCIM members appreciated the time given by operational staff at both mines 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

##### **Fatalities and major incidents (in camera)**

The CCIM reviewed in camera circumstances involving fatalities and high potential or major/significant incidents over the last twelve months. Analysis of the contributing

causes and circumstances with the view of sharing the relevant lessons between jurisdictions was undertaken and it is clear that there are common recurring factors. Key factors identified include inappropriate use of risk analysis tools, ineffective supervision and poor change management practices.

### **National Mine Safety Framework (NMSF)**

The NMSF Steering Group Secretariat provided an update on the implementation of the NMSF, particularly in relation to the legislative work. Through Safe Work Australia, public comment was being sought on the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) Mining Regulations, based on the “core” Drafting Instructions prepared by the NMSF Steering Group. The model WHS legislation, including the Mining Regulations, is to be enacted by 1 January 2012. The “non-core” Drafting Instructions, addressing additional provisions required by New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia were endorsed by a Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources (MCMPR) Subcommittee on 19 August 2011. The next step was to commence legislative drafting based on the “non-core” Drafting Instructions.

In addition, work was underway on the development of the National Mine Safety Database, which would provide mine sites and inspectorates with a data reporting and statistical analysis tool. The development of the NMS Database was expected to be completed in early 2012.

### **Governance issues**

CCIM has now concluded its first year as an independent body with responsibilities for oversight of the implementation and maintenance of the NMSF and harmonisation as applied to mining OHS legislation. CCIM members have successfully continued ongoing dialogue, contact and sharing of solutions. The CCIM, as the peak body for mining regulators, has proved to be an effective forum to share learning and develop consistency in the spirit of harmonisation.

During 2011 members have had many opportunities to meet and discuss mine safety matters due to their presence at the regular harmonisation forums such as the NMSF and SWA strategic issues group meetings. As these opportunities decrease with the conclusion of the harmonisation and NMSF processes the CCIM will implement alternative regular communication.

CCIM will play a critical role in the implementation and maintenance of the NMSF and harmonisation initiatives and will also provide oversight governance to ensure long term consistency of approach.

### **Inspector training initiatives**

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

### **National Mining Industry Safety Handbook**

NSW provided an update on the progress of the National Mining Industry Safety Handbook as a PDF. The harmonisation process will require that additional material be incorporated to make the revised document fully contemporary. The Handbook is now anticipated to be completed during 2012 when the final form of legislation is known. The Handbook will be 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 jurisdictional updates and refinements to the Mission and Strategies.

### **CCIM 2012**

The 54th Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines is currently scheduled to be held in the PNG 9-15 September 2012, subject to confirmation in early 2012.

John Mitas

Chair, CCIM 2012

September 2012



### **CCIM attendees, September 2011**

Left to right, top row: Mohan Singh (PNG), Keith Porritt (Cwlth), Rob Regan (NSW), Kee Hah, (NT), Robert O'Sullivan, (Qld), Gavin Taylor (Qld), bottom row: Greg Sleziak (Vic), Simon Ridge (WA), John Mitas (Vic), Joe Pisani (NT)