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COLIN BOOTHROYD

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## INVESTIGATING NEW CHALLENGES

**The recent recruitment campaign to build capacity at Resources Safety has been successful in attracting Dr Colin Boothroyd to accept the role as head of the new Investigations Branch.**

Colin is a metallurgical engineer and has worked in a variety of technical and production management roles across a range of industries. Before joining the Department of Mines and Petroleum in March, he provided a forensic engineering and failure investigation service through a specialist engineering consultancy for clients in the Western Australian mining, oil and gas and related industries. Part of this work involved failure investigations and being called as an “expert witness” for legal cases.

“Many of these investigations sought to identify the root causes of machinery failures and incidents related to health and safety. The forensic examination of safety failures is a critical factor in improving safety outcomes across the industry,” he said.

In his newly created role as General Manager Investigations, Colin's initial focus is on the mining industry. He is reviewing practices and procedures under the State's current safety laws and identifying changes likely to flow from the harmonisation of occupational health and safety laws across Australia. Another important task will be training and mentoring for inspectors to ensure a consistent, high-quality outcome for all investigations conducted by Resources Safety.

Colin said that he was enjoying the challenge of developing a leading practice investigation team by putting in place the right processes, protocols and resources, and recruiting the right people.

### OPERATION OF THE INVESTIGATION BRANCH

The Investigations Branch will coordinate the Division's investigative and enforcement functions in close liaison with the three operational Branches (Mines Safety, Petroleum Safety and Dangerous Goods) but will not necessarily conduct all investigations. However, the investigations team will review all reports prepared by, or on behalf of, operators and determine what further action is required by the safety regulator.

Technical staff within the Investigations Branch will be appointed as inspectors under all statutes administered by Resources Safety so they can investigate complex incidents and accidents across the safety regulator's jurisdiction. Such investigations will usually be done in conjunction with inspectors or officers from the relevant operational branch.

The investigation of serious and potentially serious incidents and accidents will be based on competent examination of systems of work and detailed engineering analysis. This is consistent with the approach adopted by the world's leading safety regulators. The primary objective is not about finding fault, but to ascertain the root cause of failure and, in the case of fatalities, to provide expert technical advice to the Coroner. The secondary objective is to determine the effective actions required to prevent a recurrence and improve industry safety outcomes.



## INDUSTRY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED AT WORKSHOP

**The inaugural industry workshop to discuss the safety reform process and safety initiatives for mines safety was held on 8 April 2011 at Mineral House.**

The workshop, hosted by Resources Safety, was organised to obtain industry input regarding priority safety initiatives for the regulator. The workshop recommendations were considered by the mines inspectorate when developing its 2011-12 operational plan.

Workshop participants included representatives from small to large companies and industry associations, safety and health representatives, executive officers, and senior mine inspectorate staff.

The workshop was opened by the Director General Richard Sellers. After several short presentations to set the scene so participants could better understand the safety regulator's role, the majority of time was spent in structured discussions with a professional facilitator. The outcomes are summarised below.

### WHAT IS GOING WELL?

- There is a commitment across the board to better safety outcomes.
- Many operators are adopting a risk management approach.
- There is cooperation and information sharing across industry, including contractors.
- The "blame culture" is diminishing.
- There is an improved commitment and contribution from the mines inspectorate.
- There is increased accountability within organisations.

- There is an investment in people.
- There is support from Government and the Minister for Mines and Petroleum.
- Awareness of importance of occupational health and safety (OHS) is increasing in senior management.
- The perception of safety is moving from it being considered a burden to being viewed as an opportunity.
- Safety has become a primary focus for the industry.

### WHAT NEEDS OUR ATTENTION?

- Clarity about what the "road map" for mines safety looks like, and the need for face-to-face information sessions on what is on the horizon (particularly with the approach to national OHS harmonisation)
- Clarification of the relationship between Resources Safety and WorkSafe and other safety regulators, and the application of responsibilities.
- Issues related to mobility of the workforce across State boundaries and differences in jurisdictions.
- Issues related to the multiplicity of jurisdictional responsibilities for single sites (e.g. ports).
- Empowerment and support of safety and health representatives.
- Development of safety awareness culture throughout industry.
- Dealing with the short timeframe for implementation of the national OHS legislation.
- Clarity regarding safety requirements over the life cycle of operation.
- Issues related to the variability of workplace culture across industry and State (one size doesn't fit all).



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- Career opportunities for safety and health representatives to join inspectorate.
- Adequacy and consistency of industry induction and training processes.
- Over-use of acronyms leading to difficulty for mobile and new workforce, and loss of meaning.
- Consistency of safety requirements for contractors who work for number of companies or sites.
- Operations' knowledge (at all levels) of risk management tools.
- Consistency of inspectorate approach, technical knowledge required, and need to focus on outcome.
- Operations' knowledge (at all levels) of legislation and responsibilities.
- Inspectorate to focus on safety systems.
- Use of risk management to address the plateau in industry safety performance.

## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The attendees were divided into five groups to consider specific questions:

- How should the regulator respond to serious (non-fatal) incidents?
- How can the regulator help you address risks at the worksite?
- Do audits by the safety regulator work? What would strengthen the effectiveness of the safety regulator?
- How can safety and health representatives operate to best effect? Is the worksite role of the safety and health representative adequately supported and recognised?
- What capabilities and capacities are required for the future?

## OUTCOMES

The outcomes from the workshop were summarised by the facilitator, George McCullagh.

The key messages from the situational assessment were:

- Dialogue is essential, with the first steps being taken at the workshop – opportunities to continue discussion and involvement in planning
- OHS harmonisation – stakeholders need information
- Critical role of safety and health representatives – how to strengthen role and impact on site
- Transparency required – information, audit program and best practice
- Competency and consistency of inspectorate activities is essential
- Visibility of operating plan – address strategic and operating issues (next 12 months and longer term).
- The key messages from the five working groups were:
- Principles of risk management are being implemented but may need support
- Build an effective regulatory organisation
- Agreed direction required
- Safety and health representatives – support their role and ensure accessibility to inspectorate
- Develop a resilient safety culture from boardroom to frontline, regulator to industry, employer to employer – and recognise champions.



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