

Mining Industry Advisory Committee

COMMUNIQUE

A summary of the 12 August 2020 meeting

1. Dr Laura Fruhen and Dr Jess Gilbert – Impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of FIFO workers

Drs Laura Fruhen and Jess Gilbert presented their research and findings into the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of FIFO workers. They compared 2018 research findings with current research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 research findings are at a preliminary stage as data is still being collected.

The 2020 survey is a targeted study prompted by roster changes, isolation and limits to social activity, with a total of 331 people from the mining, oil and gas, and construction sectors surveyed. Overall, the preliminary results show that mental health in 2020 is worse than in 2018, that support is a key protective factor, and flexibility with workload, communication with home, and having COVID-19 rules in place are important.

Discussions raised issues around: FIFO workers from interstate and overseas, who are unable to return to work due to travel restrictions and have concerns about supporting their families; the relatively small sample size compared to the 2018 study; and, comparison with the general population and non-FIFO workers.

Research findings will be updated as data was received, and MIAC members were encouraged to share the link to the survey as it is still active.

2. Coronavirus (COVID-19) response and action plans

The State Mining Engineer sent a letter to all Registered Managers, Alternate Registered Managers, Exploration Managers and Principal Employers for mine sites in WA, reminding them to remain vigilant on COVID-19 protections. Feedback and several enquiries were received in relation to the letters.

The CFMEU representative has been contacted by Chilean mining organisations for advice on how to manage COVID-19 outbreaks at mine sites. They have had 37 COVID-19 related deaths, with 4000 active cases, all of whom are still working.

3. Brady Review – report recommendations applicability to WA mining industry

Feedback was sought from MIAC members regarding the applicability to the WA mining industry of the recommendations from the *Review of all fatal accidents in Queensland mines and quarries from 2000 to 2019 – report* (Brady Review).

The report was the main focus of a recent AMEC safety committee meeting where it was noted the first 8 recommendations do not provide solutions, with recommendations 9 to 11

requiring higher level of attention. The meeting concluded that industry should focus on lost time injuries and the frequency rate as safety indicators.

The report for the DMIRS/CME co-funded research project *Taxonomic Analysis of Serious Potential Incident Datasets* will be presented at MIAC's October meeting.

The UnionsWA member, in relation recommendation 3, stressed the need for industry to focus on provision of quality training, and emphasised that many issues and injuries were a result of poor training.

Members noted that safety at some work sites in the South West of WA was better at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with a heightened awareness on safety. However, this appears to have declined after three months with people become more complacent.

An expert member expressed interest in understanding the fatality cycle, and the need to monitor individuals after training to gauge their ongoing development.

The Chair noted the need to consider where MIAC focus is required, suggesting MIAC convene a separate meeting to discuss focus areas and develop an action plan.

MIAC members agreed with the option of a separate meeting before the next scheduled MIAC meeting, with a variety of training aspects highlighted as issues on which to focus, including Brady Review recommendations 3 and 4.

4. Recent fatality – Saracen Gold Mine

MIAC members were informed about the recent fatality at an underground operation. The accident involved an operator and the loader that he was operating falling over the edge of a stope to a level 25m further down.

Over the past 20 years, there have been a number of similar incidents, including two other fatalities, in Western Australian underground mines. Five Significant Incident Reports have been issued since 2001 in relation to equipment falling into stopes. Mines Safety will be reviewing the incidents and plan to take further steps to ensure industry implement more robust control measures and reduce the likelihood of these types of incidents occurring.

5. Workplace exposure standard for DPM – update

The Chair provided update on progress to implement the workplace exposure standard (WES) for diesel particulate matter (DPM) and sought endorsement from MIAC to adopt a 12 month transition period for implementation. The Better Regulatory Unit (BRU) of the Department of Treasury had advised that a 12 month transition period for adoption of the WES for DPM be applied in WA to assist industry meet the revised standard. This would follow the NSW approach which included a similar transition period.

MIAC did not endorse a 12 month transition period, instead opting for immediate implementation of the workplace exposure standard for diesel particulate matter. The Minister will be advised of the MIAC preference.

6. Mines Safety Directorate: Upcoming events 2020

A virtual 2020 Safe Work Month to be held in October, replacing the Registered Managers Forum (held in August) and Mines Safety Roadshow (held in October). The theme for this year's Safe Work Month is "Staying focused on workplace health and safety".

On direction from the Minister, the 2020 Work Health and Safety Excellence Awards have been cancelled.

Other events still to go ahead include:

- the Mine Safe International Digital Conference 2020 (21 – 24 September);
- a virtual Conference of Chief Inspectors of Mines (19 – 23 October); and
- the Mines Emergency Response Competition (27 – 29 November).

7. Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation

The WHS Bill is currently on the list of Parliamentary business for the week.

The WHS Regulations submissions report has been sent to the Minister's office for consideration.

8. Mental Health Strategies Working Group (MHSWG)

The MHSWG met via teleconference on 29 July 2020 to discuss the progress made on the Jacob's Report recommendations. MHSWG members also discussed the future of the MHSWG, agreeing to end the tenure of the Working Group following submission of a close-out report to MIAC. The MHSWG will not reconvene.

MHSWG members also noted the broader issue of mental health in the workplace should become standing items on the MIAC and COSH meeting agendas. The Chair noted discussion at the recent Commission meeting had highlighted mental health as a key issue and that Commission members were pleased to have it on the agenda.

An expert member sought further information on recommendation 6, relating to suicide as a workplace hazard, and queried whether this could cause issues for employers and employees with a mental health history. Members were advised the intent of the recommendation was not to create possible discrimination in recruitment.

9. Nano Diesel Particulate Matter Working Group (nDPMWG)

It is intended for the nDPMWG to reconvene toward the end of 2020 to discuss the final outcomes and achievements report..

10. Significant incident reports

Three Mines Safety Bulletins were issued since the 10 June 2020 MIAC meeting relating to:

- *MSB 176: Inspection and maintenance of accessway and platform gratings;*
- *MSB 177: Inspection and maintenance of temporary generators; and*
- *MSB 178: Working on open pit walls using rope access systems.*

Two Significant Incident Reports had been issued since the June meeting.

- *SIR No. 281: Underground mine workers tipped out of work basket used with integrated tool carrier; and*
- *SIR No. 282: Fall of ground in a development heading resulting in serious injury.*

11. Commission Report

MIAC noted key items and issues from the 1 July and 5 August 2020 meetings of the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH). Meeting minutes are available on the DMIRS website. The Chair highlighted a presentation made by the Road Safety Commission, which identified methods used by that organisation to promote safety and also noted the COSH draft workplan to which MIAC could contribute.

12. Towards 2020 Commitments

The Chair noted the 2020 strategy is nearing the end of its timeline, with the Towards 2020 strategy summary report being finalised following completion of recent tasks. Drafting of the Mines Safety's strategic priorities in line with DMIRS' *Towards 2024* has commenced.

13. Mines Emergency Response training

A UnionsWA representative sought guidance from MIAC relating to issues in varied delivery by Registered Training Organisations of the Certificate III for Mines Emergency Response and Rescue. The training package was reviewed in 2018 and brought up to date. The revised package includes 14 units and requires learners to hold prerequisites before enrolling. Since its introduction a number of RTOs have advertised the package with differing number of units and a range of prices. The single mechanism for complaint about the training is through the learner making a complaint to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

MIAC members agreed the varied delivery and cost of the certification was concerning and that the complaint mechanism was not viable.

A letter will be written to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, highlighting MIAC concerns about the possible compromised quality of the training and to seek avenues to resolve the issues highlighted, including raising it with his Ministerial colleagues and Federal counterparts.

14. Next meeting: 14 October 2020

For further information on the Mining Industry Advisory Committee, refer to the MIAC page on the DMIRS website: <http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/Safety/What-is-the-Mining-Industry-8578.aspx>.

Andrew Chaplyn – Chair