

Common Cause.

August 2024



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Fight like hell for the living.**

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(IT'S CONFIDENTIAL)



**Mining &
Energy
Union**

Second death at coal mine

Byerwen site closed after two workers were killed in three weeks

Janessa Ekert

New details have been released about the worker killed when a vehicle was crushed under a haul truck at a Bowen Basin mine, the second death at the same site in less than three weeks.

A 56-year-old man, who was a Macmahon employee, was driving the light vehicle when it was crushed under a haul truck at Byerwen mine on Thursday 22 August.

The investigation into the

fatal incident, and tragically, later died.

The site has since been closed and workers sent home on full pay in the wake of the fatal incident.

The site will remain closed pending initial investigations by police and Resources Safety and Health Queensland.

This comes as workers were still mourning the death of another colleague in a crane accident earlier this month.

Mining and Energy Union general vice president Steve Smyth was on Thursday

saying the second death at the site was a "tragic" event and that the investigation into the incident was ongoing.

"We are committed to a thorough investigation into the incident and we will not rest until we have identified the causes of the fatal incident," he said.

"It is absolutely tragic, but we must not let this be the end of the story. We must ensure that this does not happen again."

He said the investigation into the incident was ongoing.

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The company said its focus was to provide support to family, friends and colleagues "and we are committed to thoroughly investigating this incident".

"Our thoughts and prayers are with our colleagues' family, friends and workmates," Macmahon managing director Mick Finnegan said.

RSHQ confirmed it was sending a coal inspector and serious incident investigation unit investigator to the mine.

Resources and Critical Minerals Minister Scott Stewart at Friday's Bush Summit in

Townsville said even one fatality was "way too many", as he voiced his thoughts and prayers for the family, friends and workers of the fallen miner.

"There will be a full and thorough investigation," he said.

"This is another person who's gone to work to do the right thing - is not coming home to family and friends."

"This is the second fatality in three weeks on that particular site, both very different sorts of fatalities."

The investigation into the second fatality in three weeks at Byerwen mine continues as members return to work.

Workers at Byerwen coal mine in the Bowen Basin were left traumatised following the death of John Linwood when the light vehicle he was driving collided with a large haul truck on Thursday 22 August.

MEU Industry Safety and Health Representatives immediately attended the site and alongside Resources Safety Health Queensland (RSHQ) issued a directive to suspend the use of all heavy vehicles at the mine.

Workers were sent home on full pay while an investigation got underway.

Earlier this week, directives given to QCoal at Byerwen mine by RSHQ and MEU Industry Safety and Health Representatives were lifted.

The directives were lifted in response to QCoal's compliance with the relevant safety processes in recent days.

Since then, members have been asked to return to work as operations have slowly ramped up over the last few days.

Queensland District President, Mitch Hughes said that members are understandably still feeling uncertain as they prepare to return to work.

"We are approaching this with extreme caution and

watching things very closely.

"QCoal has provided some evidence which demonstrates that they can resume operations safely at this stage.

"However, the investigation continues into both fatalities.

"We will continue to support our members as they return to work.

The fatalities have left the Queensland mining industry reeling, coming soon after a major underground explosion at Grosvenor mine at the end of June.

With Grosvenor remaining closed, workers are in the process of being redeployed to other Anglo operations, including Moranbah North mine, Aquila mine, and some open-cut mines.

The MEU will be supporting members as they go through the redeployment process over the next few weeks.

"There are still some details that we are working through with Anglo regarding arrangements for workers around travel and accommodation.

"We will continue to work with the company to iron out these details to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for workers."

MEU WIN: AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT POWER STATION WORKERS PASSES SENATE



23 AUGUST 2024

MEU energy members have been at the forefront of a campaign to win co-ordinated national support for power station workers affected by closures. *And now we've won!*

At our National Energy Delegates meeting in March last year, delegates endorsed the call for a national authority to fund and co-ordinate support for workers, families and communities affected by the closure of coal power stations and associated coal mines.

Since then, many MEU members have backed this call with trips to Canberra, workplace rallies, discussions with MPs, evidence at Parliamentary hearings, media commentary and social media posts. It has all made a difference!

On Thursday 22 August, the Net Zero Economy Authority Bill passed the Senate, with the support of cross-bench Senators our members met with. It must now return to the House of Representatives for a final procedural vote to become law, but that is a formality.



The Net Zero Economy Authority has the goal of ensuring power station workers and regions are supported in relation to energy transition.

The legislation establishes an Energy Industry Jobs Plan¹ that places obligations on employers at closing power stations to support their workforce including retraining, engagement with potential future employers, and paid time off work for these activities. It also sets up pathways into new jobs through a pooled redeployment scheme, with incentives for other local employers to hire affected workers.

The MEU will continue working hard in the years ahead to ensure the NZEA delivers for our members and communities.

We thank the Albanese Labor Government for their commitment to this important reform. And we thank all our members for your hard work and support to deliver this ground-breaking win.

From power station to the corridors of power

1 FROM P1
ACTU president Michelle O'Neil said the authority would help Australia expand new clean industries such as critical minerals and hydrogen power, a focus of renewables investment in the Hunter.
"It's urgent for power station workers now, and there's no time to waste," she said.
Mr O'Neil urged the Greens and crossbenchers to support the urgent passing of the Net Zero Economy Authority bill, which is up before the Senate this week.
The authority is designed to help workers retrain and redeploy and to drive new jobs and investment.
Mr Kallner met independent senators David French and Jacqui Lambie on Monday and will continue on Wednesday.





WESTERN MINEWORKERS TAMING THE 'WILD WEST'

Bargaining has begun for the first collective agreement in over a decade for Pilbara iron ore production workers.

The Western Mine Workers Alliance has launched a new bargaining campaign this month that promises to deliver the first Union agreement for iron ore production workers in the Pilbara in a decade.

The agreement will cover hundreds of production workers across BHP's Area C and South Flank, the largest iron ore hub in the world. While claims are still being finalised, workers are seeking guaranteed annual pay rises as well as a greater roster flexibility and pay parity with other BHP workers.

While the WMWA has been building strength in the Pilbara, efforts to bargain with BHP were helped along by changes to industrial relations legislation introduced by the Albanese Government in the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Amendment. Under the new laws, unions can trigger negotiations for a new agreement within five years of the existing deals nominal expiry date. The agreement covering production workers at South Flank and Area C expired in August of 2019.

This has allowed the WMWA to circumvent the Majority Support Determination process, which requires a majority of affected workers to vote in

favour of bargaining. Thanks to these changes the Alliance is able to skip the red tape and get on with securing a better deal.

BHP is currently offering pay rises to most workers of between 2% and 3%. These rises fail to keep up with inflation, particularly for workers in remote or regional areas like the Pilbara.

Additionally, workers at Area C and South Flank are deeply concerned about BHP's proposed changes to rosters that would remove flexibility. BHP is seeking to impose a binary choice on workers of either 8-on 6-off followed by a 7-7, or two weeks on two weeks off.

As the negotiations took place, BHP was touting a \$US7.9 billion profit in their annual earnings report for the 23-23 financial year. In their message to investors, BHP proudly boasts of 'extending [their] lead as the world's lowest cost ore producer,' with Area C and South Flank at the heart of this. Additionally, the company generates 'consistently superior margins' compared to its competitors including Anglo American, Glencore and Rio Tinto.

All this is to say that BHP is not hurting for cash. The treatment of workers at BHP's West Australian iron ore mines, their most profitable venture, is not a cost-cutting exercise to help stay afloat but rather

the result of a company accustomed to being able to exercise dictatorial control over the conditions of their workers.

A new Union agreement is first step to fixing that. Over the past decade the WMWA has been rebuilding Union power in the Pilbara towards this

goal, to ensure that ordinary Australian workers receive their fair share from the nation's most profitable export.

"Iron ore miners at BHP should feel very proud of this breakthrough," said MEU WA Secretary Greg Busson.

"They have stood strong together and demonstrated to the company they are determined to negotiate collectively on a new and improved agreement.

"Mineworkers in the Pilbara face many challenges in their working lives and bargaining is an opportunity to address them. We urge all workers to get on board with identifying priorities and building their bargaining power."

The WMWA is now encouraging Rio Tinto listen to their workers and come to the negotiating table in good faith. Rio needs to stop digging in their heels, and engage meaningfully with their worker's concerns.

The era of big multinationals running roughshod over the Pilbara is over. The sooner the companies recognise the new reality and start negotiating constructively with workers, the better.



3 MUST KNOWS ABOUT SAME JOB SAME PAY



SAME JOB SAME PAY DOES NOT KICK IN AUTOMATICALLY

Same Job Same Pay must be applied for.

The MEU will apply to the Fair Work Commission for Same Job Same Pay on a site by site basis.

We intend to have many applications made and approved to deliver higher pay.

THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION SETS SAME JOB SAME PAY ORDERS

After an application is made, the Fair Work Commission can decide to make an order for a protected rate of pay.

This stops labour hire workers being paid lower than permanents for the same work.

PAY RISES WILL TAKE EFFECT FROM NOVEMBER 1 2024*

The MEU is currently making applications, with some orders already being issued.

We will prioritise applications for sites where we can make the strongest case and where MEU members get the most benefit.

*After November 1, applications for orders will come into effect from the date the order is made.

**JOIN
TODAY!**





ENERGY GIANTS RAKE IN BILLIONS

As Australian companies release the details of their 2023-24 financial year performance, one of the main stories to emerge has been the extraordinary profits enjoyed by the major energy generators and retailers (or 'gentailers', as they are often called).

Origin and AGL both reported record annual profits, drawing accusations of profiteering from consumer advocates. Origin recorded a statutory profit of \$1.4 billion, up from the previous year's similarly huge \$1.1 billion. Meanwhile, AGL's underlying net profit of \$812 million is almost triple their 2023 financial year result.

Both were beneficiaries of the Government's domestic coal price cap scheme which concluded in June this year, with significantly reduced fuel costs incentivising them to run coal generators like Bayswater and Eraring more than last year. Coupled with the closure of Liddell and higher generation at Loy Yang, AGL's coal fuel costs were down 7.9 per cent per megawatt hour to \$1.80/MWh. Origin chose to increase its coal stockpile before the conclusion of the price caps, devoting \$46 million to that endeavour.

As the major players in Australia's rapidly changing electricity system, Origin and AGL have

a responsibility to workers and consumers to play a constructive role in the transition. The decisions they make about the operation and closure of their coal-fired power stations have significant impacts on local communities, alongside major implications for energy supply and security on the Eastern seaboard. It is worth noting that, while raking in these handsome profits, Origin dragged its feet in negotiations with the NSW Government around the extension of Eraring and the stability of its contracts with its traditional coal supplier Centennial. Instead of building up one billion dollars in profits, Origin may have considered making a contribution to a more orderly transition on its own accord, extending Eraring without asking the state government for potential compensation for losses, and supporting the jobs of miners at Myuna and Mandalong.

EnergyAustralia, which is a subsidiary of Hong Kong-listed company CLP Group, recorded half-year earnings of \$122 million in the six months to June. This continues the gentailer's solid 2023 calendar year performance, which saw the company earn \$444 million pre-tax, turning around a 2022 loss.



L to R: Richard Shoebridge, Blake Edgecombe, Darriea Turley AM, Nathan Fell, Ashley Byrne

MINING ON THE AGENDA FOR BROKEN HILL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Mineworker and NSW MWA member, Nathan Fell is running for Broken Hill Council.

We caught up with Nathan and the Broken Hill team to talk about their personal connections to our industry living in mining heartland, and what they're hearing on the campaign trail!

Q. Nathan, can you tell us a bit more about your connection to the mining and energy industry and a bit about the rest of the team?

A. I work in the mining industry and have deep ties to Broken Hill. My dad also worked in mining-related fields for over 15 years. I began my career in the mining industry as labour hire, building the current separation plant at CBH Resources. I have also worked as a safety adviser, in the process engineering space, and in laboratory technician roles. I am currently the Quality Laboratory Lead at the MSP Labatory. I'm passionate about ensuring the physical and mental well-being of workers and I am a proud member of the New South Wales Mineworkers' Alliance (NSWMWA).

Our lead candidate and Broken Hill mayoral candidate is Darriea Turley AM. Darriea understands mining communities, being the daughter of a staunch trade unionist father who held several positions with the Australian Workers Union

(AWU), and through her husband who was a local underground coal miner for over 43 years. She is currently the President of Local Government NSW (LGNSW), is a local Councillor for Broken Hill and is our former Mayor. Darriea was born in Broken Hill and has lived here all her life. She has worked in healthcare for over 40 years. Darriea is a life member of the Health Service Union (HSU). Darriea will also be hosting the Broken Hill Miner's Memorial on October 8 and says that all are welcome to join the service if they wish.

Ashley Byrne has worked in the mining industry for over 20 years. He also serves as a retained fire fighter. Ashley's connection to unions runs deep and he has seen firsthand the vital role unions play in protecting our rights, ensuring safety, and fostering solidarity among workers. Ashley says that unions have always been the backbone of our community, advocating for fair conditions and standing up for those who face risks and challenges every day. Ashley is a proud member of the Fire Brigade Employees' Union (FBEU).

Blake Edgecombe is a Broken Hill local. Blake's great grandfather was a local miner for decades and was a staunch union member. Blake works for the local health service and is a member and volunteer of the St John Ambulance NSW. Blake's commitment to the Broken Hill has also been

recognised by the local community, when he won the Australia Day citizenship award for his service. Blake is currently studying to become a lawyer. Blake says that many of his friends work in the mining and energy industries, and our industry is a vibrant career with many young Broken Hill residents pursuing a career in it. Blake is a proud member of the Health Services Union (HSU).

Richard Shoebridge is a registered nurse and a CNC (Clinical Nurse Consultant). Richard has found a strong sense of community in Broken Hill, and he has dedicated his career to regional health care. Richard is also active in the community arts scene. Richard's goal is to improve the quality of life for all residents in Broken Hill. Richard believes that we should keep mining jobs local and thriving. He is a proud member of the Nurses and Midwifery Association (NSWNMA).

Q. What does the Broken Hill Labor team stand for?

A. The Broken Hill Labor team stands for inclusion and fair opportunity, and we want to help build a stronger and more vibrant community for all. We want to make Broken Hill is the best city that it can be for those that currently live here and for those who will move here in the future.

Our priorities include better childcare and supporting local mining jobs. But supporting local mining jobs doesn't just mean making sure they exist. It's also about doing what we can to keep those jobs local. Locals working in our mines also means that workers will spend their money in town at our local shops, our local real estate agents, our local

pubs and more, and it will make Broken Hill a more vibrant place to live.

Q. Why is mining such an important part of the Broken Hill community from your perspective and how will you continue to support it?

A. Broken Hill wouldn't be here if it wasn't for mining. In fact, mining at one point was the largest employer in town.

There are still many opportunities in the mining industry in Broken Hill. Our lead candidate, Darriea attended the launch event of the New South Wales Mineworkers' Alliance (NSWMWA) right here in Broken Hill earlier this year.

As hard rock mining as an industry grows to produce critical minerals for the future, we support the NSWMWA which is committed to fighting for well-paid secure jobs, safe worksites and strong communities, particularly in Broken Hill which is going to grow as a critical minerals mining hub. That's also why it was so important for me to join the Alliance when it was launched.

The Broken Hill Labor team will fight for a stable and secure future of mining for our community because we understand how important it is to our community.

Q. Lastly, where is your favourite local coffee pit stop while on the campaign trail?

A. We love many coffee shops around Broken Hill, however, if we must choose one, we'd go Soul café in Argent Street near the Astra Hotel and Spargo's Pizza.





VALE, FRANK BAKER

Frank Baker was a legendary footy player, coal miner, trade unionist and working class poet. His loss is felt across our Union. A eulogy was delivered at Frank's memorial by MEU National Vice-President Stephen Smyth:

Along with many in our union and our Queensland coal mining communities, I was devastated to hear of the loss of Frank Baker earlier this month. I was honoured to speak at his funeral at the footy club in Moranbah, and these are some of the words I shared.

Where do I start on the history of Frank Baker, who was a life member of the MEU in Queensland. He received this honour in 2016 after proudly serving the Union as a rank & file member at its highest levels. Frank was a member of the MEU and its preceding unions through amalgamations for 30 years, an amazing achievement.

Frank's history in the miners' union started back in Collinsville in 1983 when he came to the mining town as the rugby league coach. Back in those days the coach got a job in the mine.

They were the only outsiders in those days to get a job in Collinsville, and were coming into a workplace which was fully unionised and a community whose history was about having a go.

Well, it turns out Frank was quite at home. While being the local coach he got to learn and share experiences about the strength in unions, hearing from the likes of sugar Bunker, Errol Coffey and others who worked at the mine and were heavily involved in the football scene.

There is no doubt that Frank's influence was not just on the football field. When he was there the whole community of Collinsville was humming and very vibrant. They loved their football and loved their coach even more.

A fitter & turner by trade, Frank worked in the main workshop at Collinsville coal mine when he first started. In around 1985, Frank was one of the first to join the UMWA (Miners Federation) from the AMWU. He was one of the first tradesmen to come across. At the time there was some friction around, but this never fazed Frank as he did always what he thought was right and what he believed would make a difference for the collective strength.

There is no doubt that his experiences in Collinsville working in a union mine helped guide him in the Union and being a union coal miner.

As there was change occurring at the Collinsville mine, he took the opportunity to leave like a number of others. He left to work at Gordonstone mine and as we know ARCO sacked the workforce and brought in scabs. Frank, alongside many other families at the time, saw this as an injustice. Frank stood his ground spending time on the picket line and traveling at the request of the union to several places, spreading the message on the injustices which had been thrust upon them all.

While he spent a lot of his time on the picket line

at Gordonstone, he also travelled and provided his voice to other ongoing picket lines and disputes right across Queensland and Australia. These included the Curragh picket line, the Hunter Valley dispute and wherever there was a fight occurring. He would always make sure he spoke to the members in his own way and would present a poem on what was occurring. There is no doubt his presence was welcomed, and I know that the members at those locations were always better for both meeting and listening to Frank.

Frank later got a job at Moranbah North mine, which was opened on AWA's (individual agreements). With Frank's focus and work ethic he and another former footballer Jeff Nixon set up the first lodge and won the first enterprise agreement and union agreement.

After working at MNC he moved across to Peak Downs open cut. He again undertook roles as shift delegate while working at the wash plant. It was in his time at Peak Downs he was first elected to the position of Central Councillor for Queensland, as a result of a vote by all the rank & file members in the state.

He was first elected in 2004 and he held the role until his retirement in 2015. Frank was known for his thoughtful contributions and his willingness to represent the views of members. You could count on Frank to give the unvarnished opinion from the coalface even if it wasn't what leaders wanted to hear.

As you have heard Frank held many positions within the Union structures from shift delegate to lodge president and then the role of Central Councillor - the highest level a rank and file member can achieve in the miners' union. Through it all Frank's passion and commitment for the Union and its members never once left him. He attended union meetings, picket lines, community events - wherever his Union needed him to help.

Frank was committed to his comrades at the mine site, but he was also committed to the international struggle for workers' rights. Frank attended forums and events on behalf of the miners' union across the globe including in the USA, South Africa, Brazil and elsewhere.

For a lot of us here today his poems and the way he delivered them was something else. They were always written from the heart and with passion, in the moment for the event he was at. His words were carefully chosen and delivered a punch and message to all those who were present. His goal was wanting to lift the spirits of those present. There was no more special place to Frank than being on the front line at a picket when those on strike needed support and a lift.

Frank was also very heavily involved in politics - helping those who had his trust, and he believed would make a difference. In my involvement with Frank, he could be the voice of reason or the voice everyone needed to stop and listen to when he raised his voice to oppose or suggest a different path. I will be ever indebted to Frank for his support and the loyalty he showed me, and he always had my back.

He was the most humble, compassionate and toughest man I have ever met. He was a mentor and a leader of the highest order. He was a true working-class hero who always led from the front, never taking a backwards step and always being the first to offer his support.

To me, as a kid growing up in Collinsville, he was my hero. Being able to work with him in later life made me understand what a true inspiration he was to us all.

The unions have lost a true legend of the movement, but I know his spirit and memories will live on in us all.

