

Digging Deeper Report and Action Plan

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The Digging Deeper Action Plan is the Mine Safety Advisory Council's response to the 25 recommendations coming out of the Digging Deeper Wran Consultancy Project. The action plan prioritises the activities of industry stakeholders to work toward achieving world class Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

The Wran Mine Safety Review, which reported in 2005, identified three areas which the NSW mining industry should further investigate in order to achieve and sustain world class performance on occupational health and safety:

1. Production bonuses and safety incentives;
2. Working time and fatigue management; and
3. OHS management systems and consultation.

As a result of the recommendations of the Wran Report, the Mine Safety Advisory Council commissioned an industry consultant to undertake a research project into mine safety, the "Digging Deeper" project.

Digging Deeper assessed the impact on occupational health and safety performance of production bonus payments and safety-based incentive schemes, fatigue management and working hours in the mining industry, and OHS management systems and consultation. The findings of the Digging Deeper project included:

- Hours of work in the NSW mining industry are high (average 49.8 per week) and far in excess of the hours worked in the mining industry on average around Australia (average 44.7 per week);
- Contractors were found to work more hours than direct employees;

- Production bonus and safety incentive schemes that involved payment in exchange for achieving particular outcome targets did not consistently or reliably improve safety outcomes. In some instances these schemes created negative effects;
- Few sites sampled during the project provided evidence of systematic risk assessments of fatigue. Roster arrangements also did not effectively control the fatigue risks associated with extended hours and shiftwork;
- All sites were found to have some degree of a formal OHS management system. Proactive sites were adequately resourced, displayed trust in management, felt supported by supervisors and there was organisational justice;
- Contractors and night shift workers were identified as not being included in consultation processes;
- Some sites failed to close the loop between intention and action on site thus fostering a disconnect between workers and the OHS management system; and
- Some sites did not always receive competent advice while management appeared to be driven by legal obligation and insurance rather than improving health and safety culture (for example, pressure to reduce LTIFR, or lost time injury frequency rate, unintentionally resulted in reduced reporting).

In total the Digging Deeper report listed 25 recommendations to be addressed by the industry. In response to the Digging Deeper report, the Mine Safety Advisory Council has put together an action plan to address these recommendations. The action plan will be implemented by the Council, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, and industry stakeholders. The Digging Deeper report also contained a call to action for the NSW



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mining industry by outlining a set of Ten Platinum Rules that would assist the industry to sustain the basics of world class occupational health and safety management:

1. Remember you are working with people;
2. Listen to and talk with your people;
3. Fix things promptly;
4. Make sure your paperwork is worth having;
5. Improve competence in OH&S;
6. Encourage people to give you bad news;
7. Fix your workplace first;
8. Measure and monitor risks that people are exposed to;
9. Keep checking that what you are doing is working effectively; and
10. Apply adequate resources in time and money.

The Digging Deeper project and its 25 recommendations can be found at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/consultation/wran-consultancy-project, along with MSAC's Digging Deeper action plan. ■