

Chairman's report: MinEx AGM: 11 September 2014

New Zealand has witnessed a sweeping change of the New Zealand health and safety system, since the Pike River Royal Commission recommendations were adopted by the Government in late 2012.

MinEx has been close to the action throughout the reforms, in engaging with government, marshalling and providing expert advice, nominating candidates to advisory boards and the like, and commenting on policy and regulatory proposals.

New Zealand now has a fit-for-purpose health and safety regime for the mining sector: with further work on the quarry and alluvial sectors, codes of practice and guidelines, and completion of the qualifications and training framework to come. The mines rescue service has been provided additional resourcing.

This successful outcome is due in no small measure to the efforts of many people, including many of you here, to revitalise and support MinEx, the mining and quarrying industry's health and safety council.

You will recall that MinEx was restructured with a new budget in 2013 to meet the pace and the intensity of the health and safety reforms. Les McCracken was appointed CEO to lead the industry's engagement with MBIE, and the Chief Mines Inspector, Tony Forster; to co-ordinate the provision of industry expertise to government; and, over time, to build the sectors capability to drive improvements in Health and Safety performance.

This year MinEx has seen a change in governance structure. This is an endorsement of the excellent work that MinEx has carried out with the support of its members. Under the change, MinEx has a new Business Plan and is now directly accountable to the Straterra and the AQA Boards, and has adequate funding, at least until 2015.

The Business Plan requires among other things for MinEx to lead our industry in improving workplace health and safety performance, to meet or exceed the Government's goals of zero fatalities, and a 25% reduction in serious harm rates, by 2025.

The call to continued action is the fact that serious harm rates in the mining industry are twice that of New Zealand industry as a whole. We can, and must do much better than that.

Looking ahead, there is much for MinEx to do – provide advice to regulators and work with the regulators to ensure we have industry sensible regulations and interpretation of the regulations, provide advice to industry operators, establish good lead and lag indicators of industry health and safety performance, to encourage everyone in industry to do their bit towards safer workplaces, to measure and report on progress, and keep industry informed of developments.

It is appropriate to reflect on the Pike River tragedy of November 2010, that spurred the Government's health and safety reforms. Our commitment, as an industry, is to ensure as far as is practicable that such an incident does not occur again in New Zealand. Our broader commitment is to ensure that all our work places are safe. A strong MinEx is at the heart of that commitment.

I look forward to continuing to be a part of MinEx as we work to achieve our goals.

Chris Baker
Chair
MinEx