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## **Media Release**

### **Nine years of risk and delays to extractive workers**

Quarry and alluvial mine workers have faced nine years of risk through delays in new Government regulations, says Wayne Scott, CEO of the Mining Extractive Health & Safety Council MinEx.

He says there are signals the new regulations will soon emerge and that will be very welcomed, but the time taken is completely unacceptable.

“These regulations were prompted by the tragedy at the Pike River mine in 2010. Even after the deaths of the 29 miners it took three years for the then Key Government to bring in new health & safety regulations, but these were aimed at underground mines.”

Wayne Scott says it was quickly acknowledged that opencast mines, quarries and alluvial mines needed fit-for-purpose regulations and a promise was made in 2013 to revise them.

“Our industries have been asking for these new regulations for 9 years and three successive Governments. What does it take for people within Government to do their job? Do they take no account of the risks posed through their ever-flexible timeframes to those working in the same broad sector as the men in the Pike disaster?”

Wayne Scott says successive Ministers have made promises to advance the new regulations from National’s Michael Woodhouse in 2014.

“Four years later, in my first meeting with new Workplace Relations and Safety Minister, Iain Lees-Galloway, he wanted to see the new regulations in place by that Christmas - 2018.”

In fact, Cabinet did not approve the regulations until late 2019.

Wayne Scott says in 2020 the case was put to the new Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Michael Wood, to make the new regulations an urgent priority.

“We noted that Cabinet, in confirming the regulations a year earlier, had learned the quarry and alluvial gold sectors would benefit from greater health and safety management – and we wanted to see them in place.”

Wayne Scott says it’s not Minister Wood nor his WorkSafe department who are responsible for the current delays.

“I think he’s done his best to get this through since taking the portfolio but MBIE, having completed its implementation review three years ago, was then responsible for drafting the regulations. I sometimes wonder if Ministers and MBIE officials actually understand workplace health and safety and the role that fit-for-purpose regulations play in improving it.”

“We are told Covid regulations now take precedence but what about the earlier six years? It’s meant exposing thousands of workers to an environment which does not have appropriate regulations to manage their health and safety. We saw 29 people die in an environment without proper regulations.”

Wayne Scott now expects the new regulations will finally emerge in the next few weeks and he hopes they can rapidly be communicated to quarries and mines and put in place without any further delays.

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