

Chairperson's Opening Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Terry Martin, Chairperson and Board Member. Mr Andrew Clough and I comprise the Board of Inquiry.

Parties have been given leave to appear at this Inquiry. Could I have appearances, please?

The full Terms of Reference are available on the Board's website. I will refer to them in abbreviated form only.

The Board is to inquire into the serious accident at Grosvenor mine on 6 May 2020, determine the nature and cause of that accident and make findings about any factors that contributed materially to the cause of the serious accident.

The Board is also to inquire into various methane exceedances at Grosvenor and Grasstree mines, and a single exceedance at each of Moranbah North and Oaky North mines.

The investigation into the serious accident at Grosvenor continues and expert reports are still being completed. The Board has decided that it would be premature to hold public hearings into the cause of the accident at this stage. Consequently, it is expected that both the accident and the methane exceedances at Grosvenor mine will be the subject of public hearings a little later in the year, hopefully next month.

Counsel Assisting will outline the nature of this first tranche of public hearings in a moment.

Before he does, I wish to say something to all of the parties who have been given leave to appear at the Inquiry, and to the mining community generally.

Whilst the evidence of parties and individuals is to be scrutinised, and witnesses asked some difficult questions, this Inquiry is not a prosecution nor a witch hunt.

The Board is to determine whether management systems in existence at the mines or at corporate levels are adequate to comply with relevant safety laws and standards, and to make recommendations directed to *all* relevant parties for improving safety and health practices to mitigate against the risk of similar incidents, including recommendations in relation to employment arrangements which may better ensure acceptable risk levels to workers.

The success of this Inquiry will be judged by the community on what comes out of it by way of recommendations to improve safety in the coal mining industry.

Undoubtedly, this Inquiry was prompted by the serious accident on 6 May.

Whilst mine safety is in everyone's interest, the best thing that all of us here can do for the injured men and their family and friends, is to do our very best to achieve meaningful improvement in coal mine safety.

I respectfully urge all parties with leave to appear, but particularly the Inspectorate, the mining companies, the labour hire companies, and the CFMMEU, to scrutinise your own positions, look within your own systems and practices for improvement to safety, and then put forward recommendations to that end.

No system is perfect. No matter how well you might believe you're doing things, please have another critical in-depth look.

With the money and effort put into this Inquiry and the combination of experience, expertise and knowledge here concerned in the Inquiry, it would be shameful if we could not recommend real improvements in safety for coal miners.

Terry Martin SC

Chairperson and Board Member
Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry