THE ROLE OF THE AusIMM IN IMPROVING SAFETY IN THE MINERALS INDUSTRIES
(i.e. LESS BANG FOR YOUR BUCK)

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INTRODUCTION

This is presented as a discussion paper for consideration by the Council of The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM). If adopted it would need the support of broader industry, government and competing interest groups.

The Institute was founded in 1883 and is the principal body representing the Professionals in the minerals industries. Although originally constituted to represent the mining, metallurgical and geological profession, some years ago the Bye-laws of The Institute were modified to allow and encourage it to adopt and promote the disciplines of all professions employed within the mining and allied industries. So now it is not unusual to see finance, safety or legal people at an Institute function, as well as the more traditional professions.

In early 1998, Dick Carter, then President of The AusIMM, put forward and promoted the concept of an Institute Taskforce being constituted to investigate its role in promoting safety in all its forms and supporting the safety education, training, assessment and emergency preparedness of its members, particularly at a time when safety issues are now being regarded as top priority for their industry employers. The Institute recognises that minerals sector professionals, because of the nature of their education, skills competencies, roles and responsibilities, are in a key and pivotal position to influence and achieve improved safety and occupational health standards and performance throughout our industries.

PROGRESS TO DATE

In the first half of 1998 the newly constituted Occupational Health and Safety Taskforce met to flesh out the role envisaged by Dick Carter. Although not yet formally endorsed by the Council of the Institute (for reasons outlined below) the Taskforce proposed the following principles and guidelines.

Key Principles

The Institute will achieve support for its members in the OH&S area by implementing and sustaining the following six key principles:

- Leadership
- Standards and codes of professional safety practice
- Training and education
- Recognition and communication of best practice safety and occupational health
- Providing support to members and their families
- Disciplinary support for Principles

Leadership

- Establish, adopt and communicate a statement of safety beliefs and principles.

- Establish, communicate and model an Institute code of safety leadership for minerals industry professionals that reflects the pivotal position of members in respect to influencing and achieving improved safety and occupational health standards and performance throughout the mining, metallurgical and associated industries.

Standards and Codes of Professional Safety Practice

- Establish, communicate and support an Institute code detailing the responsibilities of industry professionals to design, provide, operate and maintain workplaces that meet or exceed community expectations for occupational health and safety.

- Establish, communicate, train, and enforce professional standards in respect to:

  ➢ the development of effective measure to control and mitigate against catastrophic risks;
  ➢ the development of effective emergency preparedness measures to deal with potential failures in operating safety systems;

- ➢ the training in and conduct of risk assessments where new systems, procedures, equipment or technologies are to be introduced;
- ➢ the development of measures to effectively manage incremental and substantive change in workplace systems, procedures and practices.

- Contributing to the development and review of minerals industry safety regulations and standards.

Training and Education

- Identify the contemporary occupational health and safety competencies required of mining and metallurgical industry professionals and where appropriate, make input to numerous Tertiary Education Institutions courses;

- Identify deficiencies in existing training systems that inhibit the development of these competencies among Institute members;

- Facilitate the provision of appropriate training and education that will address identified and emerging deficiencies;

- Develop a framework for the continuing education and accreditation of Institute members in occupational health and safety;

- Develop an Institute Safety Monograph as a reference framework for:

  - ➢ detailing contemporary safety values and beliefs;

  - ➢ establishing and communicating accepted codes and standards of professional safety conduct, behaviour and practice;

  - ➢ identifying and communicating achievements in best practice professional occupational health and safety in the exploration, mining, metallurgical and environmental fields.

Recognition and Communication

- Develop a process to identify and recognise Australasian professional best practice occupational health and safety;

- Recognise professionals that have demonstrated achievement of best practice occupational health and safety;

- Communicate broadly throughout the minerals sector examples of best practice professional occupational health and safety.

Providing Support to Members

- Facilitating, counselling, professional and other support to members and families of members injured, maimed or killed in workplace accidents;

- Facilitating legal support to members involved in legal proceedings arising from workplace accidents, incidents or prosecutions;

- Facilitate provision of professional indemnity and other appropriate insurance schemes for members and industry professionals;

- Provide confidential counselling for members concerned about OH&S issues in the workplace.

Discipline

- Develop a system to investigate, report on, and discipline members who have failed to demonstrate due diligence and regard to the application of the Institute's safety beliefs, codes and standards. This will include the use of existing vehicles such as the Institute's Ethics Committee where a complaint is brought before the Institute.

Safety Beliefs and Principles

- The Institute, along with all other stakeholders, considers that the number of fatalities and serious injuries occurring in the mining and metallurgical industries is unacceptable by current community standards. Though inherently greater risk exists in the mining and metallurgical sectors than most other businesses, appropriate management of these risks will deliver safety outcomes that make workplaces as safe as humanly possible.

- Accordingly the Institute believes that:

  - ➢ It is an individual's right to expect a work place where risk to their well being health or safety are well managed.

  - ➢ Accidents don't just happen. They are the result of failures in process design, operating safety systems or behaviours.

  - ➢ There should be proper engineering of processes and controls, the application of operational safety systems, and adoption of appropriate safety behaviour by all concerned to support a goal of zero fatalities in the minerals industry.

> Appropriate measures should be adopted to minimise the risk of catastrophic events resulting in multiple fatalities or major plant loss.

> Industry professionals, as key stakeholders in the minerals industry, have a professional and personal obligation and responsibility to ensure that employees rights are protected and respected, and to ensure that workplaces under their control adopt and implement best practice occupational health and safety standards in terms of risk management.

> The Institute, as the major professional body representing professionals in the minerals industry, has a core responsibility to provide occupational health and safety leadership to members of the Institute and related industry professionals.

> The Institute will demonstrate appropriate standards of safety leadership by adopting, implementing and sustaining the six key principles outlined as a Code of Best Practice.

Standards and Codes of Professional Safety Practice

To establish, implement and sustain an Institute Code of Professional Safety Practice the Institute will:

- Develop, approve and adopt the required Code of Practice by July 2000.

- By April 2001, have conducted workshops throughout Australasia to educate Institute members of their professional safety responsibilities, and provide Internet/Web on line material, as detailed in the Code.

- Provide ongoing leadership, training and support to members to facilitate their adoption of the Code.

- Commencing 1 July 2001, institute a review process to investigate apparent breaches of the Institute OH&S Code and where appropriate, take disciplinary action.

Training and Education

In parallel with development and implementation of the Code of Professional Safety Practice the Institute will:

- Commencing October 2000 conduct workshops (developed in house or with appropriate service providers) to identify and develop a comprehensive framework of occupational health and safety competencies for industry professionals. Attendees at the workshops may include members, State Mining Engineers/Chief Inspectors of Mines and inspectors, leading safety practitioners and academics.

- By July 2001 have identified the further and ongoing training needs of members, any deficiencies in the safety training delivery system as it affects the development of safety competency of members, and have developed a training strategy for implementation October 2001.

- Develop and have recognised by the appropriate authorities, a framework for the continuing education and accreditation of members in occupational health and safety by July 2001.

By July 2001, have developed an Institute Safety Monograph.

Recognition and Communication

To encourage and support safety leadership and give appropriate recognition to members the Institute will, by December 2000:

- Establish a process to identify and recognise professional best practice occupational health and safety.

- Publish details of best practice professional occupational health and safety examples in the Bulletin and include regular contributions from leading industry safety professionals on key safety issues, emerging developments and best practices.

- Publish a paper on key safety issues, emerging developments and best practices in all future issues of the Proceedings with feature articles in The Bulletin three times per year.

- Commit to the development of an Institute Safety Monograph for publication in July 2001.

- Investigate whether an expansion of MINEX Awards concept could be undertaken in conjunction with the AusIMM identity and commend conspicuous individual effort in the OH&S field.

- Recognise a suitable percentage of approved OH&S education/training as part of the Certified Practicing Status of members.

Providing Support to Members

To further demonstrate safety leadership and provide support and benefit to members the Institute will, by October 2000:

- Establish a 'peer support' network incorporating members, regional Branches and Councillors that facilitates or provides counselling, professional and other support to members and families of members injured, maimed or killed in workplace accidents.

- Examine what measures and how such measures may be established to support members involved in legal proceedings arising from a workplace accident, incident or prosecutions.

- Sponsor development of professional indemnity and other appropriate insurance schemes for members and industry professionals.

Disciplinary Support for Principles

As previously mentioned, the Institute will constitute a process, either by way of expansion of the role of its existing Ethics Committee, or by other suitable means to review complaints regarding breaches of the OH&S Codes and where appropriate take suitable disciplinary action. This process to be in place by early 2001. Recognising the need for suitable measures of justice the AusIMM has a responsibility to work with the various state and national instrumentalities in this regard.

EXISTING STATUS

Being aware of the need for a long established and conservative organisation such as the Institute to regularly re-assess its purpose and structure in modern times, the Institute decided to engage an outside review group, Allen Consulting. The brief of the consultant was a complete review of the structure and operation of the Institute, particularly the relationship with and functioning of geographically far flung branches. With such a wide ranging review being undertaken it was decided to temporarily suspend the activities of the Taskforce until the outcomes of the review were clear. In the fullness of time, major restructuring of the Institute was recommended so the activities of the Taskforce are only now to be rejuvenated with the near completion of the

implementation of several of the major Review initiatives.

Several important opportunities have been taken to raise the profile of safety within the Institute where possible. These have included but not been limited to:

- A commitment to regularly publish articles with an occupational health or safety focus in the Institute's bi-monthly " The AusIMM Bulletin".

- The nomination of one of the Vice Presidents of the Institute (G Chalmers, co-author) to the chair of the Occupational Health and Safety Taskforce and the allocation of exclusive responsibility for the occupational health and safety matters of the Institute including and most notably the Ethics Committee. This step has as an interim measure allowed, where appropriate, the introduction of the Taskforce's agenda to these committees.

- Notification by the Institute of its intentions and interest in the OH&S area to various neutral and allied organisations. This has allowed some input and comment to those bodies from the Institute perspective.

Finally the Institute in general and the OH&S Taskforce in particular are acutely aware that its reason for being in this matter is not to usurp the role and responsibilities of the companies employing or engaging consultants and Institute members, but to complement and support their efforts. The many progressive and positive OH&S initiatives being undertaken by many organisations will hopefully be well augmented by the proposals of the Institute's Taskforce.