

## Man dies after wall collapses at central Queensland coal mine

By Tim Shepherd

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PHOTO: It took emergency services hours to reach Mr Routledge at the Middlemount mine. (Facebook)

**Work has been suspended at a central Queensland coal mine after a man died on-site yesterday, making it the third fatal mining accident in the Bowen Basin in six months.**

David Routledge became trapped inside the digger he was using when a wall collapsed at the Middlemount site, north-west of Rockhampton, in the Bowen Basin.

It took emergency services hours to reach the father, but he could not be saved.

A Workplace Health and Safety investigation is underway into his death, with Middlemount Coal saying it would co-operate fully.

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### Key points:

- Emergency services took several hours to reach the man who could not be saved
- CFMEU president Steve Smyth said the incident should prompt a review of the industry
- Isaac Mayor Anne Baker said the fatality would devastate the tight-knit community



PHOTO: Tributes have been made on social media for Mr Routledge, who was described as an experienced worker. (Facebook)

Company chief executive Gerrie Jordaan said Mr Routledge lived in South Mackay and was an experienced digger operator who had worked at the mine for more than three years.

"He was a highly valued member of our team and will be greatly missed by his workmates," he said.

"We extend our deepest sympathies to David's family, friends and colleagues.

"We are in contact with his family and have offered our full support to help them deal with their loss. Their welfare is our highest priority and we ask that their privacy be respected at this difficult time."

Friends and family shared their grief on social media, saying Mr Routledge was a happy person with a big smile.

Brenton Rosentreter posted on Facebook that Mr Routledge was a "great bloke" to work with.

"Never a dull moment with you," he said.

## Third deaths in six months

Queensland Branch President of the CFMEU Steve Smyth said it was a tragedy.

"The industry really needs to sit up and take notice and look at what's going on," he said.

"Because it's just totally unacceptable.

"That's three fatalities in less than six months and it certainly concerns us and I'm sure it concerns every worker and the communities in the Bowen Basin."

Local miner Troy Rogers — who was on his way to a night shift — said the fatality was a reminder of the risks of working in a coal mine.

"My father works as a digger as well so hearing that kind of hits home to me a bit ... it's a sad time ... an incredibly sad time," he said.



PHOTO: Miner Troy Rogers said it was an incredibly sad time. (ABC News: Jemima Burt)

Mr Smyth said mining operations in the region would feel a ripple effect from the incident.

"It's a ripple effect for friends and family and obviously workmates so you know it's tragic, it's terrible," he said.

"Something's got to happen. The industry in my opinion are still not taking a lot of matters seriously and there is a lot of soul searching and reviewing that needs to be done."

## Community still grieving

Isaac Mayor Anne Baker said the death of the mine worker had devastated the community that was still grieving.

"These communities are very solid, they're very loyal to each other and more so in times of sadness and tragedy — this incident will be no different," she said.



PHOTO: Middlemount Coal mine CEO Gerrie Jordaan said the company had offered "full support" to the man's family. ([www.middlemountcoal.com.au](http://www.middlemountcoal.com.au))

Queensland Resources Council chief executive Ian MacFarlane said such a high number of fatalities over six months was "really bad".

"This is a bad result in terms of the statistics. It's a devastating result in terms of the impact that this will have on the family and community," he said.

In a statement, Mines Minister Anthony Lynham sent his deepest sympathies to the family, friends and colleagues of the worker.

"Every single worker deserves to come home safe at the end of every day. For that not to happen is a terrible tragedy," Dr Lynham said.

"There will be a thorough investigation by the Mines Inspectorate, as there is with every mining incident."

State Opposition leader Deb Frecklington said she was deeply concerned and wanted to see a "proper and thorough" review.

"It is deeply disturbing that we have had three deaths in a short period of time, and I would be encouraging the Government to ensure that the appropriate review does take place in and around mine safety," Ms Frecklington said.

"However I would say today is about the family, we need to be respectful of the tragedy that has occurred and my heart just goes out to that family."

**Topics:** workplace, accidents, disasters-and-accidents, mining-industry, industry, emergency-incidents, middlemount-4746, qld, australia, mackay-4740, brisbane-4000

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