

REGIONAL NEWS

Tragic twist to fallen miner's last minutes on shift

A mine worker killed at a central Queensland mine at the weekend has been identified as a 33-year-old man from the state's south-west.

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Donald Rabbitt has been identified as the 33-year-old miner killed while working at Blackwater's Curragh coal mine. He was reportedly working on a float, which transports machinery, when it crushed him.

A MINE contractor was just minutes from the end of his Sunday shift when tragedy struck, etching his name into the shameful history of mining deaths that have rocked the region.

Donald Rabbitt, 33, was a contractor at Curragh Coal Mine near Blackwater and is understood to have been working in the maintenance department when he became trapped under a piece of heavy machinery.

Mr Rabbitt suffered critical injuries in the incident about 4.20pm Sunday.

He died at the scene.

The tyre fitter, from Goondiwindi in the state's southwest, is understood to have been a tyre fitter onsite.

All operations at the Blackwater mine have been suspended as an investigation into Mr Rabbitt's death - the first mining fatality for 2020 and the 18th in the Bowen Basin in the past 20 months - got under way.

A spokesperson for Coronado Global Resources, owner of Curragh Coal Mine, said operations would not resume until allowed by investigators.

"Workers are being progressively briefed on the incident as they arrive on site to commence their shifts and the company has made counselling services available," the spokesperson said.





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CFMEU industry safety and health representative Stephen Watts said it was time the industry looked at "a few factors" including the casualisation of the mining workforce, strengthening the Inspectorate, and reviewing industrial manslaughter laws.

"People that don't have permanent jobs can be dismissed with an hour's notice.

"With that hanging over your head, why would you want to be the one complaining about safety?"

As investigations into how the man died got under way, political leaders descended into a to and fro on the issue, with Whitsunday MP Jason Costigan seizing on the tragedy in calling for Mines Minister Anthony Lynham to resign.

"This is the same bloke who refuses to establish the Mine Safety and Health Authority in Mackay, as per those recommendations of the Queensland Parliament's Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis Select Committee, of which I proudly served as a member and so with his form and another fatality, it's time for him to go.

"Given this utterly disgraceful and sad situation, Labor's Mines Minister should resign and if he refuses to do that as well, then the Premier should step in and sack him."

Opposition spokesman for Natural Resources and Mines Dale Last said the miner's death was "absolutely tragic", adding the LNP had called for a bipartisan Parliamentary Inquiry into mine safety last July but the Labor Government "rejected it".

"Last July, Labor announced two separate independent reviews into Queensland's mine safety and these were meant to be finalised at the end of the year, but they're yet to be released," he said.

"The Minister needs to explain why they've been delayed.

"A Parliamentary inquiry will fast-track any legislative changes."

Acting Mines Minister Mark Ryan slammed the political mud-slinging in the wake of the worker's death, and said an independent investigation was under way.

"Mines inspectors are currently onsite at Curragh investigating," he said.

"Any death in our resources workplaces is unacceptable, and this government is committed to working with employers, unions and peak bodies to continue to improve protections for our workers.



CFMEU industry safety and health representative Stephen Watt outside the Curragh mine.

"This Labor Government has already extensively reformed mine safety and health over the past five years, and Queensland now has the toughest mine safety and health laws in the world. And there is further reform to come."

Mr Ryan said the government has reformed detection and prevention of black lung, and improve the safety net for affected workers, as well as increasing maximum penalties and giving the regulator powers to issue fines without going to court.

"We have worked with industry, companies and unions to have mine and quarry workers across the state attend safety reset sessions to refocus on health and safety," Mr Ryan said.

"We will introduce legislation this year to make industrial manslaughter an offence, as it is in other Queensland workplaces, and we have legislation before the parliament to establish an independent resources health and safety authority.

"As the Minister said in July, two independent reviews will be tabled in parliament.

"The government will take advice on further action from these reviews from its advisory committees and the independent Commissioner for Mine Safety and Health."

A TIMELINE OF TRAGEDY:

July 29 2018: Adam Malone, 25, was fatally injured at [Jacks Quarry when the articulated dump truck he was operating hit an embankment and turned over on a haul road.](#)

November 15 2018: Connor-Shaye Campbell Milne, 21, [was fatally injured at Fairfield Quarry when he was entangled in the tail pulley of a conveyor.](#)

December 31, 2018: Allan Houston, 49, [was fatally injured when his bulldozer overturned at BMA's Saraji Open Cut Coal Mine near Moranbah.](#)

February 20, 2019: Bradley Hardwick, 48, [died when two pieces of machinery collided underground at Anglo American's Moranbah North Mine.](#)

June 26 2019: David Routledge, 55, [was crushed to death at Middlemount Coal Mine when a wall collapsed on to his excavator.](#)

July 7 2019: Jack Gerdes, 27, was killed at Baralaba North coalmine when he accidentally [engaged the retractable staircase on a Komatsu PC4000 excavator, becoming crushed between the staircase's handrails and the excavator's body.](#)

November 25 2019: Brad Duxbury, 57, [died when coal fell from a longwall face at Carborough Downs Coal Mine.](#)

January 12 2020: Donald Rabbitt, 33, was at [Blackwater's Curragh coal mine reportedly working on a float, which transports machinery, when it crushed him.](#)

Originally published as [Miner only minutes from end of shift](#)