

# The senior CQ miners charged over high wall crush



David Routledge died in June last year in a crush incident at Middlemount mine.

THREE of one CQ mine's most senior workers are facing charges over alleged serious health and safety breaches after South Mackay grandfather David Routledge was crushed to death following a high wall collapse.

Court files viewed by the *Daily Mercury* revealed a blast occurred just 10 days earlier resulting in "a consistent 2.5-3m of hanging rock on the HW", which had been identified as likely being a "Geotech issue".

However, it is alleged no assessment of the area, where the fatal incident occurred, was made by a geotechnical representative following the blast and no effective measures were taken to mitigate any geotechnical hazards.

The 55 year old had been using a digger at Middlemount mine when the part of the high wall collapsed and engulfed the machine just after midday on June 26 last year.

As a result, the digger's cabin was crushed and Mr Routledge was killed.

Site senior executive Darren Lee Cuthbertson, mine manager Darrin Brian Milner and open-cut examiner Neville John Whiteley have each been charged over Mr Routledge's death.

Operator Middlemount Coal Pty Ltd has also been charged over the fatal incident.

Documents filed by the Mines Inspectorate state mine operations restarted just hours after the blast on June 16 and continued up until Mr Routledge's death.

The Mines Inspectorate alleges Mr Milner, in his role as mine manager, knew or should have known the "hang-up" or "frozen material" from the blast were a potential hazard to workers and that there was ongoing work in that area.

It is also alleged under the mine's principal hazard management plan, Mr Milner, 45, should have directed a geotechnical representative to "perform an inspection on the area of concern".

Mr Milner is charged with one count of failing to discharge a health and safety obligation.

The PHMP further provided if an inspection by a geotechnical representative had not yet occurred, "the hazard will be managed to ensure no employees or equipment are exposed to danger".

The documents also stated the area had been signed off by Mr Whiteley, 61, as green level or "normal operating conditions" where "no geotechnical hazards are observed".

He is charged with one count of failing to discharge a health and safety obligation.

It is alleged Mr Whiteley, in his role an open-cut examiner, knew or should have known the high wall where Mr Routledge was killed should have at least been tagged as yellow level or "minor geotechnical issues present".

It is further alleged none of the OCE reports in the week leading up to June 26 "identified any risks or hazards" arising from the condition of the wall.

Mr Cuthbertson, 54, as site senior executive, is facing two counts of failing to discharge a health and safety obligation.

It is alleged there was a potential risk to workers from the "poor results of (the blast)" and condition of the high wall.

The court documents stated there was no adequate plan or procedure in place under the mine's safety and health management system "which governed when mining activities could commence in an area which had recently been blasted".

"As a result, mining activities commenced in the shift following (the blast) in circumstances where no adequate safety checks had been applied or an appropriate inspection for potential hazards conducted," the documents state.

It is also alleged under the PHMP there should have been a "ground control management plan", which provided further details guidance on all site systems relating to geotechnical management, and that there was no such plan at the mine at the time.

"Without a ground control management plan, the safety and health management system for the mine was inadequate," the documents state.

The case will be mentioned in Mackay Magistrates Court today.