

Carborough Downs mine operator pleads guilty to charges relating to death of miner Brad Duxbury

ABC Tropical North / By Lucy Loram

Posted Fri 12 Apr 2024 at 4:01 pm



A permanent memorial has been erected in Moranbah for coal miners killed on the job.

(ABC Tropical North: Holly Richardson)

In short: Carborough Downs Mine Management has pleaded guilty to two workplace safety charges after the death and injury of two miners in separate incidents.

Brad Duxbury, 57, was crushed under two tonnes of coal during in 2019, two months after Cameron Best was injured.

What's next? The matter has been adjourned for sentencing at a later date.

More than four years after a Queensland grandfather was crushed by two tonnes of falling coal, the operators of his workplace have pleaded guilty to charges relating to his death and other offences.

Today it was revealed in the Mackay Industrial Magistrates Court that another life-threatening injury occurred at the same mine site just two months earlier.

Ipswich man Brad Duxbury, 57, died after being buried under coal when completing electrical works at Central Queensland's Carborough Downs Mine, near Moranbah, in 2019.

Workplace Health and Safety prosecutor Josh Underwood told the court the mine's failure to follow "comprehensive" safety procedures was the cause of both accidents.

"The complaint is not that the safety procedures at the mine were inadequate," he said.

"It's that they weren't followed."

Brad Duxbury's death

On November 25, a mine worker who was operating machinery to shear from a long wall coalface noticed there was damage to a large electrical cable.

Safety infrastructure that ensured the coalface remained in place was not deployed when Mr Duxbury set off to fix the electrical issue, the court heard.

Mr Duxbury entered a "no access" zone, standing virtually in front of the coalface when part of the wall crumbled.

"The coalface began to crack and around 20 tonnes of coal fell in his direction," Mr Underwood said.

"He was crushed by about two tonnes of falling coal ... and he was declared dead two hours later."



Brad Duxbury was killed at the Carborough Downs Mine in 2019. (Supplied: Facebook)

The mine's lawyers said it enforced extensive safety training in the long wall mining area, but acknowledged more could have been done to ensure the safety teachings were followed.

An earlier incident

Two months before Mr Duxbury was killed, another worker was severely injured in a different area of the Carborough Downs mine.

On September 7, Cameron Best responded to a "strata failure", where a cavity in the coal mine's roof needed repair.

"In the months leading up, there were three incidents of stratus failure," Mr Underwood said.

"By the end of the nightshift, further strata failed again."

The court heard a corner of mesh safety net had been cut, exposing workers below to falling objects — placing Mr Best in the path of an 85-kilogram slab of rock.

"Mr Best suffered a laceration to his liver, a laceration to his spleen, fractures to his vertebra, and rib fractures ... associated with a collapsed lung," Mr Underwood said.

Matter adjourned for sentencing

Carborough Downs Coal Management pleaded guilty to one count of failing to discharge workplace health and safety obligations causing death and one count of failing to discharge health and safety obligations causing grievous bodily harm, following the incidents with Mr Duxbury and Mr Best.

Magistrate Athol Kennedy adjourned the matter for sentencing at a later date.

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