

Carborough Downs mine fined for Brad Duxbury death, Cameron Best injury

ABC Tropical North / By Danielle Jesser

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

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- **In short:** Carborough Downs Coal Management has been fined \$720,000 over a worker's death and injury to another worker.
 - The incidents happened about two months apart at the central Queensland mine.
 - **What's next?** Carborough Downs acknowledged more could have been done to ensure safety teachings were followed.
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Central Queensland underground coal miner Brad Duxbury went to work one Monday in November 2019 and never came home.

The experienced electrician and grandfather was crushed in the early hours of the morning by about two tonnes of falling coal at Carborough Downs Coal Mine near Coppabella in the Bowen Basin.

Mr Duxbury, 57, from Ipswich, was declared dead two hours later.

His employer was on Monday fined \$720,000 over his death and injury to another man, Cameron Best.

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.

During hearings in the Mackay Magistrates Court, Workplace Health and Safety prosecutor Josh Underwood said Mr Duxbury went to repair damage to a large electrical cable.

Mr Underwood said safety infrastructure that ensured the coalface remained in place was not deployed when 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.

Multiple incidents

His death came two months after another miner, Cameron Best, was severely injured in another coal fall.

Mr Best was injured on September 7, 2019, when he responded to a "strata failure", where a cavity in the coal mine's roof needed repair.

Mr Underwood said there were three incidents of strata failure in the months leading up to the incident.

"By the end of the night shift, further strata failed again," he said.

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.

Acting Magistrate Athol Kennedy on Monday fined the mining operator \$480,000 for Mr Duxbury's death and \$240,00 for Mr Best's injury.

No conviction was recorded.

Penalty reduced

Mr Kennedy reduced the fine from \$900,000 due to mitigating circumstances including an early guilty plea, the company's cooperation with authorities and its lack of prior convictions.

Barrister John Bremhorst, acting for Carborough Downs, said the fine was a significant penalty and asked the company have nine months to pay.

In delivering his sentence, Mr Kennedy quoted from a similar judgement which said the community was entitled to expect large and small employers to comply with safety requirements.

"Employers, suppliers and managers must take the obligations imposed ... very seriously," he said.

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.

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