

Mastermyne charged with industrial manslaughter over death at Crinum coal mine

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In short:

Mining contractor Mastermyne has been charged with industrial manslaughter over the death of coal miner Graham Dawson in 2021.

The case will be the first test of new industrial manslaughter laws applying to the mining industry in Queensland since 2020.

What's next?

Mastermyne will face the District Court in Emerald on November 19.

Queensland's new industrial manslaughter charges will be put to the test when the operators of an underground coal mine face court later this year.

Miner Graham Dawson, 60, died during a roof collapse at the Crinum mine, 60 kilometres north-east of Emerald, in September 2021.

The Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor (OWHSP) has charged Mastermyne Crinum Operations Pty Ltd with breaches of Queensland's Coal Mining Safety and Health Act.

It has been charged with industrial manslaughter under new provisions added to the act in 2020.

Resources Safety and Health Queensland (RSHQ) investigated the incident and presented a brief of evidence to the OWHSP.

An RSHQ spokesperson the regulator was aware that charges had since laid over Mr Dawson's death.

"This is the first time a charge of industrial manslaughter has been made under mining safety and health legislation since it came into effect in 2020," the spokesperson said.

Testing the law

The case will be the first test of new industrial manslaughter laws applying to the mining industry in Queensland.

Mining and Energy Union Queensland district president Mitch Hughes said the legislation was amended in 2020 after a decade of campaigning by the union.

**"No one was ever held to account for hurting someone,"
Mr Hughes said.**

A guilty verdict of industrial manslaughter carries a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment for individuals and senior officers and 100,000 penalty units (about \$16 million) for a company.

Mr Hughes said previous penalties for mining fatalities had been inadequate.

He said the Mastermyne case could set a precedent for the Queensland mining industry, which has had three mining-related fatalities this year.



The entrance to the Crinum Mine, about 60km from Emerald. (ABC News: Jemima Burt)

In a statement Mastermyne, a subsidiary of ASX-listed mining group Metarock, said it was carefully considering the charges.

The company said staff safety was its top priority.

A spokesperson said it would "continue to engage with [its] workforce to learn and improve to achieve better safety outcomes every day".

"Because this matter is now before the court, it is not appropriate for the company to make further public comments about the incident until the conclusion of the legal proceedings," they said.

Eleven deaths in five years

Mr Dawson is one of 11 people to die in coal mines across Queensland in the past five years.

He and two of his colleagues were installing part of a roof support system when an underground section of the Crinum mine caved in.

Mr Dawson's former partner Wendy McKeown welcomed the prosecution.

"I am so relieved that something has been done — everyone should be able to come home from work," Ms McKeown said.

The company will appear at Emerald Magistrates Court on November 19.

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