

# Queensland Oaky Creek Coal Mine death triggers safety questions from union



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ABC Capricornia

Mining Accidents and Incidents

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## In short:

Operations have been suspended at the Oaky Creek Coal underground mine following the death of a worker.

It is the fourth mining death in Queensland this year.

## What's next:

The mining union says it will question why there have been so many fatalities in the industry.

The Mining and Energy Union (MEU) is demanding answers in the wake of another fatality at a Queensland mine, marking the fourth mine death this year.

A man in his 30s was declared dead at the Oaky Creek Coal Mine's north site yesterday.

Another worker suffered life-threatening head, arm and leg injuries and was flown by rescue helicopter to Rockhampton Hospital.

He remained in a stable condition on Thursday morning.



The union says it is awaiting more details on the fatal incident at Oaky Creek Coal Mine. *(Supplied: Glencore )*

The MEU's Steve Smyth said the workers were undertaking a maintenance task in and around the conveyor belt.

“At this point the accident is under investigation,” he said.

“[I'm] not exactly sure what type of task it was, there has been a failure of some sort and obviously resulted in this serious accident and loss of another miner's life.”

## **Support for mine workers**

Mr Smyth said the union had industry safety and health representatives on site who would be supporting workers.

“It's been a very, very tragic time and there's not a lot of answers to what is going on,” he said.

“The ripple effect of a loss of life will be felt.

**“Even if people are not directly there at the event, it's the ripple effect of working at a mine or around the industry itself when these events occur.”**

Oaky Creek Coal is located near the township of Tieri, 300 kilometres from Rockhampton, and is managed by Glencore.

Glencore has confirmed the two workers were carrying out maintenance works.

In a statement, Glencore Australia chief executive Ian Cribb said the relevant Queensland authorities had been notified and mine operations were suspended.

"Our deepest sympathies go out to both workers' families, friends and colleagues," Mr Cribb said.

"This is devastating for our entire Oaky Creek workforce, and we are providing support services and counselling."

A report will be prepared for the coroner and police are assisting Resources Safety and Health Queensland (RSHQ) with the investigation.

RSHQ's coal inspector issued a directive to isolate the incident scene while it was investigating.

### **Premier says companies responsible for safety**

Speaking at a press conference in Rockhampton this morning, Queensland Premier Steven Miles said it was an “awful tragedy”.



Steven Miles says companies need to take better care of their workers. *(ABC News: Michael Lloyd)*

"Too many mine workers have died this year," he said.

"How often do we need to hear of a worker who has left their family in the morning and died at work?"

Mr Miles said he felt strongly about workplace health and safety given his mother was a workplace health and safety inspector and his dad worked in a factory.

“Nobody should die at work,” he said.

Mr Miles said the “onus should be on the companies”.

“These are big profitable multi-national companies ... they need to be taking better care of their workers,” he said.

“My heart goes out to the family of this man who has lost his life and those who have been injured as well.”

Member for Keppel Brittany Lauga offered her condolences to the friends and family of the workers.

“Every worker deserves to go home after a shift and it’s a serious tragedy that’s occurred yesterday in our region,” she said.

### **Fourth mine tragedy**

The latest death marks the fourth mine death in Queensland this year.

All have been in Bowen Basin mines in the Central Queensland region.

Mackay man Luke O’Brien was reportedly crushed between the tray of a moving light vehicle and the bull bar of a stationary B-double truck at Saraji Mine at Dysart on January 15.

The 27 year-old was taken to hospital but died later that evening.

Two deaths were recorded at the Byerwen Mine near Glenden in August.



Luke O'Brien died at Saraji Mine on January 15, 2024. (Supplied: Cairns Speedway)

Chris Schloss, 48, died after being struck by the boom of a pick and carry crane on August 3.



Chris Schloss died at Byerwen Coal Mine on August 3, 2024. *(Supplied: QCoal)*

Contractor and Bundaberg man John Linwood, 56 died when his vehicle collided with a large haul truck on August 22.

“With all these tragic events we want to make sure we get to bottom of it and find out what’s happening,” Mr Smyth said.

“We are just having too many workers killed and not returning home.

“Certainly a lot of questions are going to be asked.”

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