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Dead man's wife is due to give birth

Adam Wratten | 22nd February 2009

DAYS after the death of her husband in a mine accident at Blackwater on Friday, Leanne Barker is preparing to give birth to the couple's fourth child.

John Barker, 33, tragically died when the ute he was driving collided with a piece of heavy machinery at Blackwater Mine.

He was an employee of Nixon Communications contracted to the Blackwater mine. Operations at the BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) site were suspended after the accident at the mining lease on Ardurad Road.

Yesterday a family spokesman said Mrs Barker, who is eight months pregnant with the couple's fourth child, wanted to thank her husband's employer, management at the BMA mine and the community for their support in the family's hour of need.

Mrs Barker has been comforted these past few days by family members who have been flown to Central Queensland by Nixon Communications and BMA.

"What has been wonderful is Nixon Communications, who John loved working for, flew my parents up here on Friday and they arrived about 9pm to support Leanne," Mrs Barker's brother Bruce said late yesterday.

"Then BMA flew myself and Leanne's other brothers, Kevin and Neil up the following day.

"They've all gone out of their way to help and have said they will do whatever they can to support Leanne and the children."

Bruce said Mrs Barker would head to Brisbane today to see her obstetrician.

"The birth is expected in the next two weeks," he said.

"Leanne then plans to spend about one week to settle down with the baby before coming back to Blackwater for a memorial service.

"This will be a celebration of John's life."

Funeral details are still being finalised.

Bruce said John and Leanne moved to Blackwater about 18 months ago from the Redlands area of Brisbane with their three children Lachlan, 11, Harrison, four, and Oliver, two.

"They had really settled in here," he said.

"John thoroughly loved his job.

"Since coming to Blackwater he'd really blossomed."

He said John learnt his trade as an electrical engineer in the armed forces.

His passions were his family, fishing and trail bike riding.

Police and investigators from the Department of Mines and Energy were investigating.

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