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Proposed Pike River Mine Re-Entry

As an International Mining Consultant based in the United Kingdom specializing in Mines Rescue systems, I have closely followed the tragic developments at Pike River coal mine and provided testimony to the Royal Commission into the disaster.

I can also testify to the physical condition of the Drift having visited Pike River mine twice, travelling underground into the 170m seal in support of WorkSafe whilst providing strategic support to the Chief Inspector of Mines in establishing a New Zealand Mine Emergency Management code of practice, also testing the new Underground Mines Emergency Protocol and establishing the inaugural New Zealand Mines Rescue challenge competition.

I would reiterate my comments to the Royal Commission recorded as evidence in the official inquiry that recovery of mine sites post explosion is a vital part of any proper investigation, providing hard evidence not only to the official inquiry and securing justice for victims, but to discover important technical information for the international mining community to hopefully prevent any recurrence.

Whilst the Royal Commission was as thorough as possible, it was denied key physical evidence because of the failure to re-enter and recover the mine.

Recovery of coal mines following incidents and disasters caused by fires, gas and dust explosions, ground failure and inundation has been safely completed many times to recover victims and vital physical evidence.

It is therefore inaccurate at a purely technical level for SENZ to maintain that recovery of the Pike River mine is ‘impossible’ because it is ‘unsafe’.

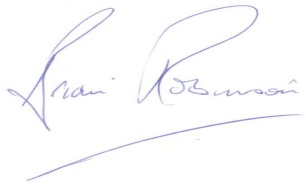
It can be made safe once the risks are controlled, and there are numerous recovery techniques available depending on the prevailing conditions.

The 2.3km Drift, in my opinion, is recoverable being self draining, in hard-rock, and linear in structure. The advantage at this site which utilises surface boreholes (equipped with Venturi ventilation devices) as air-returns simplifies stage re-entry of the Drift in fresh air and is a significant strategic advantage.

The passage of time and absence of oxygen has nullified heat sources within the inner coal workings whilst having minimal detrimental effect on the ground conditions of the hard rock tunnel structure, which can only be determined by physical examination. Should repairs be required, these can be effected using standard equipment as part of normal mining engineering practice.

I have studied the revised re-entry plan designed by the Families experts and feel it addresses foreseeable major hazards. I am therefore happy to endorse the scheme and offer my services to bring it into effect

Yours sincerely



Brian Robinson – 11/12/16
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