

Frederick 'John' Hempseed

31st October 1951

Union: AMWU

Coal Industry Start Date 17th April 1972 – Finished Date 5th December 2012

Occupation – Maintenance Fitter at Kianga Coal open cut until the early 1980's, I then moved to Moura 'Complex' Workshop at Moura open cut.

Shifts Worked – There were 3 rotation shifts, day, afternoon and permanent day shift on 8hrs shifts, a 7 day roster (FED-FA Style) 8hrs and 12hr shifts with day/night rotation.

Areas Worked – Kianga, Maintenance and breakdowns on 7900 dragline, 6IR drill, Cat coal drill (open cab) dart coal haulers, Cat loaders 834's, Dozers Alice Charmers, H.D41 Dozer, Euclid coal hauler and water trucks, Kenworth water truck, lighting plants, generators etc. All mechanical work associated with a R.O.M dump station:

Moura Mine – complex workshop maintenance and breakdowns on all machinery in open cut – Coal trucks, dozers, loaders, coal drills, lighting plants, generators, AMFO trucks, cranes and low loaders etc. I was out in the open cut environment doing 'pit fitter' duties at various times during my employment at both Kianga and Moura.

In my time in the Coal industry there has been many times that the question of coal dust and dirt dust has been talked about at Union meetings and in discussions between workers and mine management. In the open cut mining operations depending on the conditions the coal can be quite dusty and depending on wind velocity and direction the pit or face, can be dusty: Not all workers in the pit are in air-conditioned cabs e.g. coal drill shoveler, grounds man for production, any maintenance people who may be in the pit, surveyors, etc.

Water carts were used to quell dust levels but they sometimes were kept to busy on the haul roads to keep pit dust to a minimum. Some coal seams are dustier than others. Some have a high moisture level and some don't so they are dusty. Some workshops depending on their location to other plants, pits and wash plants could have excessive dust blowing through them depending on wind direction. Haul roads past workshops also create dust issues in workshops. Coal and mud etc. fall off trucks and are crushed by other vehicles causing finer dust air born particles.

Wash plants are naturally dusty places and the ROMS and dump stations, control towers and sive bins make a lot of dust that is air born but by far the dustiest places are the reclaim tunnels as they were a great source of very fine dust. Wash plants produce lots of fine dust by their nature of crushing and washing coal. Conveyor belts run everywhere – they produce fine crushed coal at tail drums and sumps. Some days wash plant, dump station operators and maintenance people look like they have been underground.

I know workers who have been in working in wash plants and open cut workshops who have looked like underground miners at the end of shift, depending on the tasks and conditions that they have worked in that shift. Workers doing clean up work at tail drums and in reclaim tunnels especially come to mind. I fear some if not all of these people may face difficulties in the near future.

The “complex” workshop at Moura had a belt line on one side and on the other side a bit further away on the western side of the “bucket site workshop” there was a Haul Road located. Both the belt line and the haul road were sources of dust depending on wind directions.

I lost a good friend from “lung problems” this year. Was he a victim of Black Lung? He worked at Collinsville mine. He had the oxy trolley with him for years. Some recently retired workers could be headed the same way. Some workers have been prescribed “Puffers” because of a shortage of breath issues – where will this lead in the future.

Dust monitoring has to my recollection been done spasmodically and not only on the dusty days. Sometimes in wet and rainy conditions dust monitors would be handed out. Not all results of dust monitoring were ever revealed. The results had to be asked for and sometimes were not made available. Dust monitor stations were installed in various locations in the Moura community. One is at the school precinct area. The closer the mining came to Moura town the amount of dirt, dust etc. the greater the amount of dust on the outside of houses. Outside BBQ’s, tables, walls, and verandahs were constantly being washed down before use.

In closing I think that self regulation of the coal industry, by the owner/operators has been a failure. An independent body should have the control of dust monitoring. To have had confirmed cases of Black Lung in the open cut should not be a great surprise to the industry. This is just another tragedy that miners and their families have to deal with.

MOURA TOWNSHIP

The town of Moura will experience more dust issues in the future with the stockpile and load out to service the Baralaba Coal Mine being located just outside the town precinct. The amount of dust in the town must increase the risk of more cases of disease caused by air born dust pollution. The coal will be transported by road transport to the stockpile area. Dust suppressant can’t work 100% of the time, especially during dumping and loading operations.

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