

11 October 1997

Ms Helen Silver
First Assistant Commissioner
Industrial Commission
LB2 Collins Street East

Dear Helen

I wish to make a small but none the less factual submission regarding the black coal industry, based on my consulting experiences.

I understand that seniority rather than ability determines who gets what job or task, such as the shovel or drag line is operated by the most senior and most of the time the least competent of people.

I understand that sabotage prevails so that the men may sleep on the back shifts. This includes carrying two repleted HRC fuses in the work bag and switching them with good ones at the isolator, plus overloading a machine so much that the hydraulics burst - both of these practices will result in loss of production time of 2-4 hours.

Contrast the above instances with what was able to be achieved at Camberwell Coal, where there exists a multi skilled and flexible workforce, where there is no demarcation, people are paid according to skills acquired rather than required, and seniority only exists in order to break deadlocks based on merit and competency.

The management in coal mines seem to have problems with the skills acquired/required argument. BHP management have problems with a no blame culture as well as sharing information with the employees.

Problem solving and developing shared future scenarios seems to be completely outside the thinking of the leadership of the CMFEU, although some individual CFMEU officials privately have a more realistic view of the nature and purpose of their employment.

I hope I have helped in some small way and given the view of some one without any particular bias.

Kind regards

Michael Minns