



Senator Malcolm Roberts
One Nation Senator for Queensland

19 March 2020

The Hon Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Customer Service
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Dominello

I write to express my concern in regard to the abuses of casual black coal mine workers in the NSW Hunter Valley coalfields.

I was concerned to hear about SIRA and iCare's part in the abuses these everyday Australians have endured and seek your support to put things right.

For your information, I am informed that Chandler MacLeod Group (CMG) as the labour-hire employer, may have colluded with the CFMEU (Hunter Valley Mines Division) to rip-off casual workers. They negotiated a 'sham' agreement to underpay workers 40%, knowing these workers were slipping through the cracks in the industrial relations and workers insurance systems. They, like others, underpaid and under-declared the number of people on site and the types of jobs they did, declaring that the casuals who were working at the coalface in coal production were 'administrative staff' in order to save money reducing insurance and workers compensation premiums. Surely this is illegal?

It is understood that CMG as the employer, did not have appropriate insurances to cover workers they employed to work in the Mt Arthur Mine and over a period of five years they failed to pay them or credit them with the entitlements due to black coal miners.

I am also informed that CMG entered into an enterprise agreement declaring that they had no casuals, when there were already casuals working for them on site at the mine. CMG, like many such companies, employed a team of employment and industrial relations professionals and would have done these immoral things knowing they were taking advantage of these workers.

Coal LSL, a government organisation and one which is ruled by the CFMMEU and the Minerals Councils, is no better. It has been revealed in Senate Estimates hearings that they just accepted timesheets from employers without questioning them, and when employees complained, Coal LSL ignored them. But now, as it turns out, after I questioned them at Senate Estimates, these workers were right and Coal LSL was wrong.

As you are one of the NSW Ministers responsible I draw to your attention my concerns that the NSW based workers compensation and insurance agencies like iCare, SIRA and Coal Mines Insurance do not care and have ignored legitimate claims from these black coal mine workers. Due to 'cracks' in the system, these workers have been denied the rights owed to them. I would be happy to refer the individual cases to the appropriate authorities for review.

I ask that you ensure that these abused coal workers get their due entitlements from the correct scheme for black coal miners.

These matters require co-ordinated responses, real action by the NSW and Australian Governments to rectify the serious issue of employer non-compliance and to introduce tougher employment laws to deal with wage theft and exploitative labour hire arrangements. I request that you contribute to this effort to put things right for these everyday Australians and for casual miners in the Hunter Valley.

If you require further information or wish to discuss this matter I would be happy to assist.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Roberts', with a small star-like mark at the end of the signature.

Malcolm Roberts
Senator for Queensland