

SUMMARY.

We have the honour to report the result of our investigations to be as follows :—

1. The disaster occurred in No. 6 bord of No. 5 section of Ralph's Taupiri Mine.
2. The explosion was caused by a naked light used by Martin (deceased), thereby igniting a gaseous mixture of CH_4 in No. 6 bord.
3. Safety-lamps were used by the mine officials for examination purposes, but naked lights were used throughout the mine by the workmen.
4. The ventilation of the mine generally was efficient, but was defective as regards section 5.
5. The examination of the mine as a whole was satisfactory, but the inspection of the old workings was inadequate, and the absence of ladders in the high bords prevented a thorough examination in such places for gas.
6. The only explosive used was Curtis and Harvey's blasting-powder.
7. There was not to our knowledge in the past history of the mine any occasion on which it was necessary to withdraw the workmen.
8. The means of escape in case of accident were afforded by three shafts, which in our opinion were adequate.
9. The management of the mine was, speaking generally, good, but in certain respects—*e.g.*, the prompt carrying-out of the Inspector's orders, the precautions taken against danger from gas, the ordering of safety-lamps, and the examination of the old workings—it was lax and unsatisfactory.
10. The Inspector of Mines is a careful and competent officer, zealous and conscientious in his work; but he was remiss in not exacting prompt and strict obedience to his orders, in not more frequently visiting the old workings, and he committed an error of judgment in not insisting on safety-lamps being used in the mine after the accident to the miner Kelly.
11. The inspection by the workmen's inspectors was infrequent and valueless.
12. No inspection was made of bords Nos. 4, 5, and 6 of section 5 (old workings) by any person on the morning of the accident, before the workmen were permitted to enter.
13. The door at the end of bord No. 6 of section 5, where it connects with the working-part of the mine, was not locked, nor in any other way securely fastened. If there had been no neglect with respect to the matters mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs the disaster in the mine could not have happened.

14. This report contains suggestions for the prevention, as far as possible, of similar accidents, and for the safe working of this and other mines in the future.

Before concluding our report we would like to place on record our high appreciation of the prompt and spontaneous manner in which the attempted rescue of the men in the mine was made by the management and workmen, and of the courage and resource displayed by all engaged in the work.

We desire to express our appreciation of the assistance rendered to us during the inquiry by the learned counsel engaged, and of the able and courteous manner in which the examination of witnesses was conducted by them.

The Secretary, Mr. J. T. Watkins, has merited our sincere thanks for the able and satisfactory manner in which he has discharged his duties.

We return herewith Your Excellency's Commission, and also enclose herewith—

- (1.) Verbatim report of the evidence submitted to the Commissioners.
- (2.) Notes of the evidence taken before the Coroner at the inquest, which it was agreed should be accepted and used as though tendered to this Commission.
- (3.) Plans, documents, and letters produced at the inquiry.
- (4.) Addresses of counsel appearing before the Commissioners.

And this our report we have the honour to respectfully submit, for the consideration of Your Excellency, in obedience to the Commission addressed to us.

Given under our hands and seals, at Wellington, this 30th day of October, 1914.

FRED. J. BURGESS, Chairman.
J. C. BROWN.
JOHN DOWGRAY.