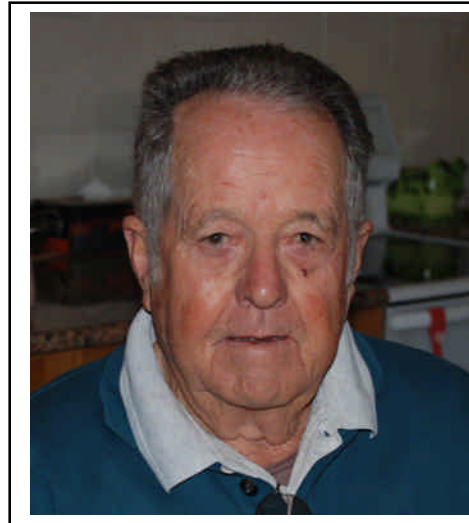


Patrick Farrell

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Interviewer: Margaret Cook

Assisted by Bevan Kathage



My name is Patrick James Farrell. I have a First Class Mine Manager, Mines Surveyor and Mines Electrician's certificate of competency. The positions I held in my 32 years in the mining industry were Mine Electrician, Mine Surveyor, Mine manager Open Cut, Mine Manager underground, Inspector of Coal Mine and Senior Inspector of Coal Mines. That covers the lot of them for 32 years.

Prior to entering the coal mines I was an electrician in the railway and at RT Edwards and SEQEB. I started work as an electrical fitter in 1956 and I worked in that capacity until 1958. During this period I studied and was successful in getting my Mine electrician's certificate and competency. That was at Blackheath Colliery where I started.

In 1958 I took up the position of Mine Electrician at Abermain No 1 and No 2 mines with Rylance Collieries and Brickworks at North Ipswich. In 1959 I enrolled at the Ipswich College in the Coal Mining diploma course. I was successful in obtaining this in 1964. During this time I obtained my 2<sup>nd</sup> class certificate and the

Mines' Surveyors' certificate. In 1964 I joined the Rhondda Colliery group as an electrician and in 1965 when my surveyor's ticket was granted I took up the position of surveyor for the group. In 1965, in addition to my survey work was appointed Manager of the open cut operation. Between 1969 and 1972 I was appointed Manager initially at the Bogside No 3 Colliery and then at the Cornwall Colliery.

In 1972 I joined the Aberdare Whitwood group as Manager at the No 8 Colliery. Following the death of the General Manager in 1973 I assumed this position. I remained there until I took up the position of Inspector of Coal Mines for the Department of Mines in 1975. From 1975 to 1976 I was in the Brisbane office where I carried out inspections in the West Moreton and Maryborough fields. In 1976 I was transferred to the Mackay office where my area covered from Emerald to Collinsville and for a 9 month period it included the Backwater field.

In 1979 I was transferred back to the Ipswich office. In 1981 I was appointed Senior Inspector. In 1982 I was transferred to the Brisbane office. As Senior Inspector I

remained there until my retirement in 1988. During the period 1987 to 1988 when the Department was being restructured I was appointed Acting Chief Inspector of Coal Mines.

Since retirement I have carried out the following work as a consultant. At Bundamba TAFE I rewrote the mine deputy's study course and part of the open cut examiners study course. I was appointed part-time teacher to conduct the Mine Deputy's course at the Emerald TAFE College. This course was set up to allow selected experienced miners to study and gain their Mine Deputy Certificate. This was normally an 18 month part time course but was restructured to a full time course for 6 weeks and was agreed to by Gordonstone mine and the Ipswich TAFE.

Through my role in the Department I was responsible for writing legislation and in particular, the general rules for open-cut mining 1988. These rules provided for the Managers to set up schemes for the running of the mines. For example inspection rules, first aid, etc. It was quite a departure from the previous legislation. Since my retirement I have been commissioned by the Managers of three of the larger open-cut mines to set up schemes for them.

*Interviewer: When you started as an electrician at Blackheath how big was the mine?*

There were a number of tunnels operating – no 1, no 2, no 5, no 6 and no. 7. No 1 was the main production tunnel working the four foot seam using scraper loaders loading into wagons and hauled to the surface by rope and endless haulages. The other tunnels were hand worked. No 2 was

closed in my time due to a fire. No 5 was hand worked. No 6 was hand worked as was no. 7.

*Interviewer: Were you the only electrician?*

No Boris Sverdlof was the mine electrician there. It had a wash plant. It was one of the early ones. It was a big mine in the early days when P & O owned it. They used to get the coal for their ships from the Aberdare seam.

It closed not long after I left. I went as a mine electrician to the north side to the Rylance group then. No 2 mine was using scraper loaders loading on to scraper chains and onto belt conveyors to the surface. Doug Broadfoot was the Manager at the time.

*Bevan Kathage: We called it a scraper. It pulled it back with a rope and then forward onto the chains and then it was belt loaded from there.*

No 1 mine which was between No 2 and Haigmore mines was hand worked but later on they introduced scraper chains and loading in to wagons hauled to the surface by rope haulage

*Bevan Kathage: What seam did they work down there at Abermain No 1 – the Eclipse?*

I think it was. The interesting thing there was that on the two days of the solar eclipse, the whole tunnel was lit to pit bottom. It was daylight down there. You didn't need a light for the whole time. It was about 250 yards to pit bottom.

*Bevan Kathage: We open cut a lot of Wright's seams. There was a pit to the north of us, I forget its name. They worked all through there – the Eclipse.*

It was a wonderful resource. We went down to put a stone drive down to Wright's old shaft in no. 2 mine at Tivoli. There was one above that. You go on the road coming from Ipswich to the Tivoli school, there are a few tunnels on the left that go under the road. Stan Brookes and I went down one day. Those were the days that the ribs of the pillars were smooth and there was no coal there. They had cleaned the lot. They picked it down till it was smooth and there was no loose coal. We were able to go down and have a look.

No 2 ran out of coal and they put the stone drive in and picked up the old Wright shaft. I remember lowering Stan Brookes down the old shaft. When the mine shut I was involved in the stone drive and I picked up a lot of mining experience. Then we put the belts in to work that mine. That mine joined the mine in Hill Street – North Extended – later on. It is on the southern side of Hill Street where there is a gully.

It disappeared in the floods. They lost a couple of cars and the pit head.

*Bevan Kathage: And a brand new belt.*

It closed after the 1974 flood

*Bevan Kathage Yes. They were old pits, if I can use the term. It was a lot of old working and it was too much to fix.*

Then later on, when Don Livermore worked at No 2 mine, they went over the top and joined up to it.

*Interviewer: So all that area is undermined?*

And underwater too.

*Interviewer: Did the other mines at Rylance get mechanised or remained hand-worked?*

They were all scrapers.

*Bevan Kathage: They finally mechanised no 2 but it got flooded too.*

That was after my time. No 2 mine had only 415 volt supply down the pit and we ran into a lot of voltage drop problems as the mine went deeper. Every time we put a belt extension down we'd start the belt up and start the chains up and the belt would stop of vice versa. That was one of the reasons they came out of there. The little dam on the surface broke away and flooded the pit. It took 2 or 3 months to pump it out again.

This was the time that I was studying so I set out to get my mines surveyors certificate and this was one of the main reasons to join the Rhondda Group as mine surveyor. Before this the surveying was carried out by Ian Hargraves.

He had his own business. Ken Harris taught surveying. We used to do our practical surveying in Queen's Park. It is the most surveyed piece of land in Queensland.

*Interviewer: Was that to widen your mining experience?*

I was coming through the diploma course and I could grab that one on the way through. But I had to do the diploma course to get the manager's certificate. Rhondda was ready to mechanise with the miner then.

*Bevan Kathage: There was the Rob Roy, Strip of Bacon and then the Four Foot in layers on top of each other.*

The mine had worked the 4 foot seam and Rob Roy seam which was the bottom seam. The intention was to work the top seam and drop it down a shaft to the Rob Roy onto the conveyor and then to the surface. My first job was to survey the bottom roadways and straighten them to take the conveyors underground and load on the surface conveyor (which involved the old horse tunnel) to the surface stockpile. They then introduced the continuous miner.

Yes my first major job was to straighten the existing roads which had been hand worked in the Rob Roy seam ready for the belt installation. The main workings were in the Four Foot seam above and the coal would then be dropped down a shaft between the seams to the belt system and transported to the surface. The face machines were a 6 cm Joy miner, an 8 BU loader behind and two Joy shuttle cars to take the coal to the belt tail end and then to the shaft. This was a very interesting job and was very successful. Wayne Wilson was my cadet when I set up the survey office. We were very busy for quite a while. Another job was to set out the site for the bore hole at the surface to take the high tension cable underground to supply power for the mechanisation.

*Interviewer: Were there other surveyors or were you the senior surveyor?*

I set it all up as a rookie. It worked. You had to do it, that was it. Wally Ritchie was Superintendent. Vince Smith was the Manager.

They had horses there when I went to Rhondda before they phased them out. They were pretty popular still and they had big stables and a number of horses. When they put the miner and the belts in they took the horses out.

*Interviewer: So that was your main job, putting the belts in?*

Getting the roads straightened and putting the belts in. It took the best part of 18 months.

*Bevan Kathage: In the old days when they worked by hand they drove the roadways slightly uphill.*

So that the full wagons could run out and push the empties back in and keep the grade down. They just followed the grades.

*Bevan Kathage: If you see plans that show the roads block like, it was not like that because as the seam rolled they followed the contour which climbed slightly. Belts can only work in straight lines. They can vary a bit.*

That was so the wagons didn't rush out and they would sprag the wheels and then push them back. Also at the bottom of the shaft at Rhondda they had the north and south dips and they weren't connected. When we put the belt in we had to find out where they were and they were over a pillar out in the survey. We just saw it on the plan all nice and sweet. It wasn't.

Seeing that the only common thing here was the shaft it was important to set up an accurate survey of the shaft on the surface and pit bottom. I was able to pick up coordinates of the survey which were established when the power lines were put through from the new Swanbank Power Station. When the hydraulic mining system was introduced in the rise workings we had trouble again with the existing plans. When they dropped a shaft between the seams here and using the new survey we were able to make some sense with the plans. The original survey to the rise so inaccurate it wasn't funny.

*Bevan Kathage: That is why when people say go back to the original plans you wonder how accurate they are.*

That was a shocker!

*Bevan Kathage: It all depends on where you start.*

You have to get a starting point.

*Bevan Kathage: It has to be right and you have to come to it by 2 different routes if you can.*

To get the levels I used the railway levels as they are very accurate. I found them on the old loop lines that came through and I brought it back to the Rhondda shaft and then we surveyed it down the mine. We had the old horse tunnel to go down. So we came in and put a base at the top of the shaft. So we got the shaft where it should have been. It was a nightmare. People were getting paid big money to do the surveys.

When we get to Aberdare I'll tell you about Rylance. When we were doing the open cut and we got an agreement to take the boundary pillar and share it. When we got down there

Rylance had gone through and taken a heap of coal but the plan showed the barrier still there.

*Bevan Kathage: This was over here at the Chum?*

Near the washplant. We went down to get the barrier pillar it had a lot of holes in it. The surveying at Rhondda was bad. It was a good thing to get involved in.

*Bevan Kathage: It says they didn't have any controls on them and they didn't have people working around them which would have picked it up.*

There should have been two barrier pillars. But when we got down there they had gone. When you think about it, it could have been serious with water, gas or fire.

*Bevan Kathage: There was a fire at Aberdare Extended and they had left a horse down there in the pit next door and the horse got out through the barrier.*

When I was inspecting at the Rosewood area, a lot of the leases didn't include the road. So you had a barrier on both sides of the road. When they were open cutting you applied to take that coal in another lease which included the road and the barriers. I got up there and the road had gone and the barriers had gone and no lease.

*Interviewer: Is the barrier supposed to be a set width?*

It was a chain barrier.

*Interviewer: So two chains should have been left alone?*

With a road in the middle. There were a lot of roads out there that were surveyed but never used.

*Bevan Kathage: It would be a two chain or one chain road.*

This was open cut, the whole thing. I said to the Manager “You have a problem here. That road is not a lease. You’d better talk to your surveyor. Get the paperwork in and I’ll get it through.” You’ve got to sort it out. Rhondda did the same. They had mined it, filled it in. You get the coal while you are there.

At Bogside I ran along the barrier pillar and I wanted Box Flat to give me a little more coal while I was down there but they wouldn’t.

## **TAPE 2.**

They didn’t go down and get it either. So it is lost. But that was an interesting thing with the surveying. I didn’t believe it could be so far out. So if you ever see the old plans for Rhondda they are not right. It was very good experience at Rhondda.

Interviewer: Then you became a Mine Manager?

While I was surveying I started open cuts at Rhondda so I was doing both jobs.

*Interviewer: So where are the open cuts at Rhondda?*

Mainly around the outcrops. While I was working at Rhondda we went round the outcrops and we were working about 150 cover. We were separately mining the clay for the brickworks. We take the top seam, then take the clay out for them, then take the next seam of coal.

*Bevan Kathage: The area from Rhondda through to Aberdare is amazing from the air because you can see the floor of the seams as they go back as they have all been taken off.*

Another interesting one, are the power lines in and out of there are on an anticline. There was no coal as the seams cropped out and mines worked away from each other running away from the anticline.

It was interesting working the Rob Roy on the open cut. What did they call the bottom section of Rob Roy.

*Bevan Kathage: The Rob Roy was usually thin – 6 to 8 feet.*

The bottom seam was thicker again. It was quite good coal.

*Interviewer: How deep did you open cut?*

It is not like open cuts now. Where the seams cropped out on the anticline you went down and chased the seam down until the overburden ratio was too high. You would have trouble mining there. At Aberdare we back filled and later on they went down and took another two seams under the wash plant. It was fairly successful too.

Rhondda was a good organisation over the period. They had a shaft there and mined different seams. Over the period it was quite a large mine.

When I went there they were working two sections and they didn’t have an undercast. It was a nightmare. I ended up putting in an undercast.

Interviewer: What is an undercast?

To ventilate a mine the air is drawn into the mine and if there is more than one section the air has to be split to feed both sections before going back to the surface. This involves taking the return air of one of the sections over or under the other workings via the overcast or an undercast

Production at the mine when I took over was poor to say the least so I had to set out to improve this. There was an existing problem between management and the men so it was not easy at the start and it was not long before long the mine went into receivership. The receiver's representative and I had a meeting at the union office and told them if production did not improve the mine would close. We needed at least 40 cars per shift as a minimum. The next day we had 42 cars before a shuttle car broke down behind the miner towards the end of the shift which showed it could be done. Another problem was that the company had an insurance policy which covered the lost time and production when a breakdown occurred hence there was no maintenance programme in place.

The 1974 floods affected us badly. We lost the underground mine and the open cut was flooded. Pumps were installed in the cut and this then became the only production source.

Then the job came up at the Department and I took it.

*Interviewer: Did you do your Mines Rescue work before that?*

1962- 1973. I was a trainee. After Box Flat I said I would stay another year. They used to retire you at 45-48. I stayed for another year so they could get some new people.

*Bevan Kathage: It was 50 when I left.*

When I was transferred to Mackay in 1976 I was the Secretary/Treasurer (Ex Officio) of the North Queensland Mines Rescue Committee. When I came back to Ipswich in 1979 I was made Secretary/Treasurer of the Booval Committee later renamed Sothern Queensland. Whilst in Mackay with the help of Mel Bell the Mechanical Inspector we started the first Open Cut Mines Rescue competition. As an aside one of the written questions was "What would you do if an oxy bottle caught fire in the workshop" One answer was "I'd ring the brigade and head for the hills".

I was in the brigade here. I was out at Box Flat that night. I did three runs underground.

*Interviewer: You would have known a lot of the men?*

Box Flat disaster ruined my social life. Three mates were killed. It stops you, it changes your life. Morrie Tait and Andy Haywood, in particular, we were pretty close.

They are still remembered. I was sitting next to Clarrie when it went off. Ronnie Hollet was on one side and I was on the other. I enjoyed the Mines Rescue.

I joined when I was studying. Bill Owens, was one of the teachers at College. He was the Superintendent. He used to teach us maths. He was pretty good at it too. He encouraged us to join and I was looking for experience. That is how I got into it. You build up friendships.

*Interviewer: Then you take that knowledge into the workplace. It must help your career as well.*

You could call on it. You had a lot of experience when you think back. Then the competitions, they were good fun.

*Bevan Kathage: It is almost a subset of mining as it goes across all the districts.*

When I was training up at Gordonstone I encouraged people then to get into the brigade to learn. I had a bloke, an off-sider for me. One of courses I used to take was mines rescue. He said "Do you mind if I take that one?" "That's fine Dave. "Where are your notes?" "Up here" (tapping my head).

*Interviewer So we are up to the Mines Department.*

I was there from 1975 to 1988 as an Inspector of Mines. I had 12 months at the Brisbane office inspecting Moreton and Howard fields.

*Interviewer: Inspectors called out if there was a problem but do they do regular inspections as well?*

Normally monthly inspections. It was all about safety, that is what it was. We checked ventilation, took gas samples. Dust played a big part. I had to shut a mine down due to lack of roadway dust treatment.

*Bevan Kathage: I told you about New Hope almost being shut down.*

It was only shut overnight. I rang the Manager Jim Lawrie and told him I was coming up and had a letter with me and wished to discuss it with him. It was an order by the Chief Inspector Bill Roach that the mine be closed until it complied with the regulations with respect to the treatment of stone dusting of the roadways in the mine. Our samplers had

been in to test the mine and the tests indicated that did not comply. The Manager asked me when it was to close I said "right now". He assured me he would fix it overnight. Righto I will be back in the morning. Overnight they did this. I have no idea where they got the dust from but they were ready for production next morning. Stone dusting was necessary for the prevention of explosions.

*Bevan Kathage: What about the apparition of the bloke in the car?*

That was an interesting one. I got a ring from New Hope one morning. You'd better come as a man has driven a car down the pit. Oh yeah! So out I went. This guy did. He drove his car down no. 6 tunnel, for about 200 yards. We got him out but the interesting part was where he drove down to get him and tow him out with the haulage we had to get the high Tommy Dods out. How he got down past them I'll never know. When I got him up to the office I said "what happened?" He was sick and was taking medication. I was playing bowls at Paradise Point and when we were going home, my mate said follow him. So I followed him and I ended up down a mine in Ipswich. I picked up his tail light and went down the mine. Poor old Scotty McMurdow found him in his whites the next morning. He died three weeks later from a medical problem.

*Bevan Kathage: The interesting part was he was following his mate. Where is his mate?*

How did he find the tunnel? The tommy dods were high and we had to take them all out. The worst part was Scotty. When Scotty found him he said he was following his mate. Gees there's two of them!



### **Tape Three**

It wasn't funny for that poor bloke. He hadn't been drinking or anything. The things that happened at New Hope.

That was one of the first to be closed down for the lack of stone dusting.

*Interviewer: So most times people were given warning and the chance to fix it up?*

We sampled it and the mine itself sampled it and got it tested. We got copies and mainly concentrated on our. If there was a fault we would ring the Manager and say area so and so, get it dusted. That was the roll of the inspectors, safety. Roadway sampling and the sides and the roof. We were looking for the very fine dust, minus five micro. The ones that could float in the air. We also did sampling for lung inhalation. We put instruments on the guys, they'd work the shift and we'd take it back and test it. Mainly checked roof support systems and the likes of that. That was the role.

*Interviewer: Its sounds interesting.*

It was. It was in different mines and that is what made it really interesting. When you went down Leichhardt and it was 2%. They used to lower the men down the upcast shaft where the air came out and it was reading 2% on the way down.

*Bevan Kathage: The main shift room was at the bottom of the shaft.*

No flame proofing, just dust and weather proof gear.

*Interviewer: How does that get built in the first place?*

*Bevan Kathage: They just translated it from the south coast of NSW to Ipswich.*

I went in one day there. They didn't have an overcast. I had to get this done later. They were getting a place ready to start production. I went from there and went over to another section and I picked up 2.5% and I wasn't down at the face by then.

*Bevan Kathage: You are only allowed about 1.25%*

I said where is the Deputy? He came in, a really nice bloke. He had his light (safety lamp) polished. You could see your face in it. I said get your light down here that is what we are getting. He said those silly electronic things they don't work. I said get your light down here. The light went out. He said I bumped it. I said go back and re-light it, he came back and it went out again. So I had to go and shut the work.

They were doing a lot of drilling for gas drainage in those days. I went past the drill, they were drilling into the face to break away, and I when I got down there and when I got into the return it was reading 6%. So I came back and said to the guy shut the drill down. "I'm busy". Shut the drill down please. We had to clean that one out.

I got down another day, it was a dead end place that had broken off and at the first part it was 2.5%. Shocker! No brattice. We don't use that. They used two fans. When I went to the fan I had 2% and the fan wasn't going. It couldn't start. Have you go any brattice? Go and get it and I'll show you how to use it. It was then clean as a whistle. In the meantime there was no Manager on the surface.

Once we got the fan going it was ventilated and OK. They were shutting the fans down on the weekend. Can you imagine! I wrote it in my report. I said they had to use brattice if they wanted to shut the fans down. They said they didn't use the fans as they didn't have the labour to do it. Righto, put up brattice before you go home. I wrote the report out and the Superintendent said he'd like me to withdraw it. I said no. I can't. It is written. He said I'll go to the Chief Inspector. Be my guest and while you are at it go to the Minister. Why would I go to the Minister? Because he can't withdraw it either. It stops there mate. "I'll fix you" he said.

*Bevan Kathage: He didn't want to address the problem.*

It was a terrible pit, a shocking pit. They were only getting about 10 ton a shift and they had coal. They had an outburst and blew the whole face out and killed two blokes.

Bevan Kathage: At Blackwater they started a brand new underground mine in 1973/4. The shafts were operating but there was no history of underground in Blackwater, it was open cut. So people from the south coast, it was owned by BHP effectively, designed an operation in Central Qld. Where they put it down there was so much gas. It had never been drained or anything.

#### **Tape 4**

*Interviewer: That sounds terrifying. As an inspector you must have had you moments.*

The thing was, they were getting about 2 skips a shift. It was designed for 10,000 ton a day and they couldn't get a cart load out.

*Bevan Kathage: It was such bad conditions you couldn't get good people to work there. So the problem compounded.*

I finally made them put an overcast there. They had plenty of ventilation but it didn't get to where it was necessary. But can imagine shutting the fans down over the weekend and they didn't know how to work a brattice line.

*Bevan Kathage: This is all, I would suggest to you, because there were no pit men there.*

The Deputy in charge had been a farmer. I went in one day at South Blackwater and you couldn't see the miner driver for dust. I said shut it down. "It'll be right we've nearly broken through". The Deputy came in and asked what was wrong. I said I was shutting them down for dust. He said you will wreck our bonus. I said I'll take your light off you and you'll never work in another mine in you life. Are you going to play ball. Let's get some air in here. We went outside and the brattis was hooked up. Put the brattice in and you can get your bonus.

*Interviewer: How much power did you have?*

I could shut a mine. The Unions could too.

*Interviewer: If you shut them down and you came back and they hadn't done it what happened?*

I shut it. At Blackwater they couldn't get any air in the place. We used to put regulators in the air ways and block them off. At Blackwater it was all open with the brattis flapping around. You can laugh now but when you went down there it wasn't funny. The one at Leichhardt had me worried. It took us about 4 hours and we still had 2% in the general body. We shouldn't

have been in there. But if you don't try and do something.

*Interviewer: So mines inspectors are written into the Act?*

We are appointed by parliament. There was a Chief Inspector of Coal and Chief Inspector Metaliferous – two separate positions.

*Bevan Kathage: Because there are different rules. They are different in Queensland than NSW. When I came up from NSW they wouldn't accept my ticket.*

Harrow Creek was the first big underground mine that Utah put in near Peak Downs. South of Blackwater. John Sleeman (Sleeze) was a great guy. Roger Marshall was the Superintendent and John was the Manager and they started Harrow Creek.

*Bevan Kathage: Mick Madden was the Deputy.*

I'll never forget the day they were going to put the miner down Harrow. Ievan Roberts came up and we were sitting on the bank. In goes the miner. They did four cuts with the miner and it stopped. There were people everywhere. It was embarrassing. When they got going they were ok. Roger was the Superintendent. Sleeman was the Manager for a while. One section of the return was pretty bad. He said I don't have to dust it. You do because it is in the Act. I am going to write to the Chief Inspector. Are you going to write to the Minister? – my usual line. While you are at it let Joh know too because you are going to have to do it whether you like it or not. OK.

They were pretty good to work with. There were 7 draglines being erected in my time in the north. Utah was good to work with at

Peak Downs. Bill Andrews used to put out a monthly newsletter and they called him the Bull. Bill Andrews, DD, dozer driver, that was all he had. A good operator too.

*Bevan Kathage: A lot of the senior managers at Utah were operators. They didn't have qualifications that you or I would recognise but they were good and they knew how to do it.*

As soon as I wrote the report at Peak Downs. The Manager would read it and take it into Bill's secretary. She'd take it to Bill who'd read it and she'd copy it and it went on every notice board on the mine. They would check that it was all done and fixed.

I went down a ramp one day and all you could see was the exhaust pipe of the dozer. No barriers erected. I came in and told Bill and he went out and sacked him. I said he could fix it. No. They didn't want anything against them. It had to be spot on and they would fix it straightaway.

Bevan Kathage: The other side of that coin was that they could afford it.

The Mackay job was really good. A lot of travelling as the nearest mine was 200 kilometres away. Then they tried to move the office to Emerald but no-one would go there.

*Bevan Kathage: It was only Mackay and Rockhampton.*

I was Chief Inspector for 12 months in Brisbane. Graham Hardie was appointed Acting Chief Mining Engineer for the State. I took his role. While I was there too that was when we had the blow at Kianga, Moura 4, in 1986. I tried to get the State chopper to take the GCL (the gas chromatograph– a testing devise). The GCL

was the government chemical laboratory that did all our testing. I wanted to get them up to Moura. When I found out the chopper was at the coast with Joh. So I tried to hire one and it was \$1500 an hour. I went up to Bernard Cox and we had an agreement. We landed on the airstrip in the river. The boys got the gear on and worked out the weather was wrong so we couldn't go.

There was a bloke on the Coal Board – Merv Noon. He organised a dedicated phone line at the mine and got that going and when Joh got back they all flew up. Graham came back from holidays and he went up.

It was after that the Unions pressed pretty hard to get gas testing at the mine. Simtars were able to go into their machines and check it. Thiess' at Blackwater had it all set up but it wasn't working. Simtars in Redbank can go into every mine and check equipment remotely.

*Bevan Kathage: When we started off in the pits it wasn't known.*

The Miner's Union had pushed for every mine to have monitoring installed and that SIMITARS be able to remotely check this equipment and make any adjustments where necessary. This was taken to the Minister for Mines who agreed with the proposal and this is the case today.