

Bernie Monk, spokesman for families of Pike River mine disaster writes

New Zealand letter of condolence to the families of those killed in Cobar, Australia mine explosion

Bernie Monk
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The World Socialist Web Site has received the following letter from Bernie Monk, whose son Michael was one of 29 workers who were killed in the 2010 Pike River coal mine disaster in New Zealand. It is addressed to the families of Holly Clarke and Ambrose Patrick McMullen, who lost their lives in an explosion at Polymetals' underground Endeavor Mine, north of Cobar, in the Australian state of New South Wales.

The Pike River disaster—one of New Zealand's deadliest workplace disasters—was not simply a tragedy, it was a crime, brought about by cuts to regulations by successive governments and a company that placed profit and production ahead of workers' safety. The union bureaucracy covered up dangerous conditions in the underground mine before the explosion and afterwards defended Pike River Coal, as did the entire political establishment.

Despite overwhelming evidence that the mine was effectively a bomb waiting to go off, Labour Party and National Party governments have continued to shield company managers and directors from any accountability for the past 15 years.

In 2021, the then-Labour government aborted an underground investigation of the mine, reneging on its promise to recover evidence of what caused the explosion and prosecute those responsible. The families of the victims continue to fight for justice and to expose the full truth about the disaster.

My name is Bernie Monk, former spokesman for the

families of the 29 men who lost their lives in the Pike River Mine disaster in New Zealand in 2010. On behalf of the Pike River families, I am writing to express our deepest sympathies to all of you in the wake of the recent tragedy at the Endeavor Mine.

The tragic news has reached us here in Greymouth, and it has brought back many painful memories. We were all shocked and saddened to hear that two of your community members, a young woman named Holly Clarke and an Irish man named Ambrose Patrick McMullen, lost their lives. We extend our condolences to the families and friends of Ms. Clarke and Mr. McMullen, and our thoughts are with the injured worker as she recovers from her ordeal.

We know what you are going through: the initial shock, the grief, and the struggle to make sense of a tragedy that should not have happened. In these moments, it is important to stand together and support each other. From our experience, we know that community is the most important thing during these times.

Our thoughts are with the families of Holly and Patrick, and with the entire community of Cobar. We know that justice is never easy, but we urge you to stay strong and pursue answers and accountability.

Sincerely,
Bernie Monk
On behalf of the Pike River families



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