



Pike River Royal Commission

Embargoed until 2.00pm Thursday 28 April

28 April 2011

EXPLANATORY NOTE

PIKE RIVER ROYAL COMMISSION – PUBLIC HEARINGS DEFERRED SEVEN WEEKS

Summary

The Commission has issued a revised hearings timetable following submissions made at its preliminary hearing in Greymouth on 5 April.

Public hearings in Greymouth will now begin on 11 July, some 7 weeks after originally planned. The extra time for preparation will make for a smoother process for the Commission and participants.

Introduction

On 5 April 2011 the Royal Commission held a preliminary hearing in Greymouth which outlined its draft timetable for the year and sought submissions on that timetable and associated issues. At the preliminary hearing the volume of likely evidence and the number of participants became clearer.

We are now issuing a revised timetable which defers the start of the hearings but gives more time for the Commission to organise them so that they are more efficient when they are held.

The New Timetable

Phase 1- Context

Written evidence by 6 May and 3 June Hearing 11 July to 22 July

Phase 2 - Search and Rescue

Written evidence by 1 July Hearing 5 September to 23 September

Phase 3 - What happened at Pike River? To be scheduled

Phase 4 - Policy Aspects To be scheduled

Changes

The major changes are:

Phase 1 Hearing (Context)

The start has been moved 7 weeks. The hearing will now begin on 11 July instead of 23 May.

Importantly, the content of Phase 1 has been widened to include some issues which were previously to be examined in Phase 4. These relate mainly to the resourcing and management of the responsible government departments. This extension will make the following phases more efficient.

Phase 2 Hearing (Search and Rescue)

The start has been moved 9 weeks. The hearing will now begin on 5 September instead of 4 July.

Written evidence will however be required to be filed with the Commission 9 weeks before the hearing begins, rather than the original 3 weeks. This will give the Commission and participants more time to analyse that evidence and to plan for a more efficient hearing.

Phase 3 (What Happened at Pike River?)

We are deferring the scheduling of the start date until we are clearer on the implications of two issues which are the subject of current discussions with the parties concerned.

The first issue is that the extensive investigations being conducted by the Police and the Department of Labour will not be concluded for some months. There are some difficulties in using evidence collected by those agencies whilst their investigations are current.

The second issue is that Pike River Coal Ltd (In Receivership) has indicated that it is unable, for financial reasons, to play a full part in this Inquiry. Our planning had assumed that the company would play a full part throughout the hearings.

Despite the new dates now set for Phases 1 and 2 hearings the Commission aims to hold the Phase 3 hearing (or at least a substantial part of it) this calendar year.

Phase 4 (Policy Aspects)

We will hold off scheduling a hearing for Phase 4 until the Phase 3 situation is clearer. The Phase 4 hearing is likely to be simpler than originally planned because much of its content has been moved to Phase 1.

Reporting Date

Under its warrant the Commission has to report no later than 31 March 2012. It is too early to say whether the changed timings will affect that reporting date.

Attachments

- 1 Minute issued to Participants
- 2 List of Issues
- 3 Index to forthcoming joint legislative paper by responsible agencies

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