

@THE COAL FACE

Vol 1 No 11: August - September 2017

MINERS TEAM UP

YANCOAL AND GLENCORE HAVE JOINED FORCES IN THE ONGOING SAGA OF RIO TINTO'S COAL & ALLIED SALE.

Glencore was recently unsuccessful in its last-minute attempts to outbid Yancoal for the purchase of Rio Tinto's Coal & Allied assets which include HVO and MTW, but it wasn't the end for the mining giant. With Yancoal's purchase all set to go, Glencore has secured an agreement with them to take a 49 per cent interest in HVO and form a joint venture following completion of the deal.

Glencore released the news on July 27 that it will pay \$US1,139 million in cash to acquire 16.6 per cent of HVO from Yancoal, and the companies will work together to purchase Mitsubishi's 32.4 per cent interest in the operation to reach the 49 per cent stake.

Glencore said that the HVO JV will be jointly controlled by Glencore and Yancoal through a joint venture management committee comprising three representatives of both JV participants.

Glencore believes the deal will unlock mining and operating synergies for the company in the Hunter Valley.

"Glencore's combined portfolio of mines in the Hunter Valley, including HVO, will have production capacity of 69 million tonnes per annum of high quality energy coal to meet increasing Asian demand," the Glencore statement said.

Glencore will also buy \$US300 million worth of Yancoal shares in the upcoming capital raising it has planned to fund the Coal & Allied transaction.

The transaction will be funded from Glencore's existing cash resources and committed facilities and is subject to Glencore obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals. Glencore expects the transaction to close within six months.

GLENCORE



IMAGE COURTESY OF KARL HOFMAN



WAMBO WINS AGAIN!

FOR THE 9TH YEAR STRAIGHT, THE BRIGADESMEN FROM PEABODY'S WAMBO UNDERGROUND HAVE TAKEN HOME THE WIN IN THE HUNTER VALLEY MINES RESCUE COMPETITION. FOR ALL THE ACTION CHECK OUT PAGE 26.

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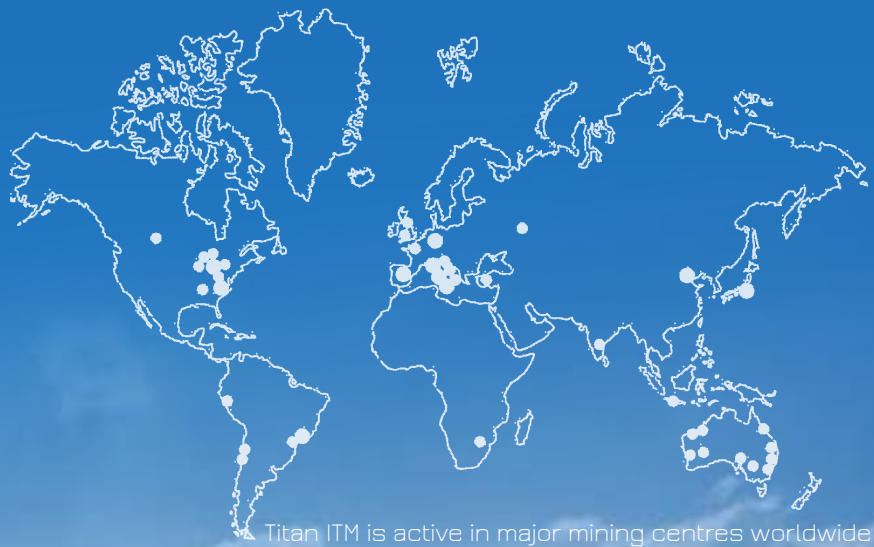
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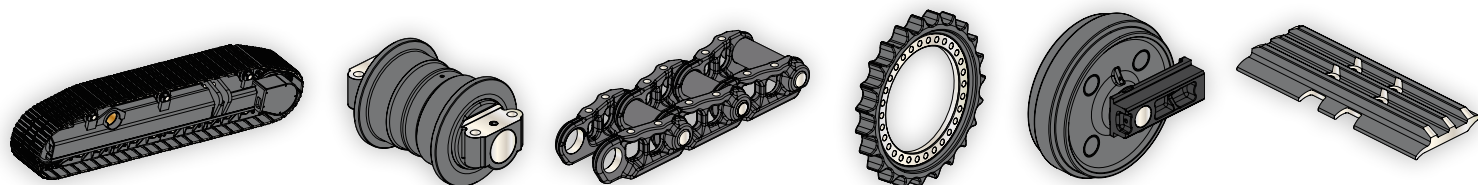
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WHAT A YEAR!

THIS EDITION MARKS THE END OF @ THE COALFACE'S FIRST YEAR SO WE TOOK A LOOK BACK AT ALL THE LAUGHTER, ALL THE TEARS AND ALL THE SCREAMING...

It was an exciting year for mining in the Hunter, the best coal prices in years meant that there were many a smiling miner reaping the benefits. But there were also some hard losses as we said goodbye to Drayton and saw a few long-time suppliers close their doors.

Yancoal certainly had more than their share of cover pages with the Rio Tinto sale being in and out of the news since January, but now Glencore has stolen some of their limelight.

This year has seen us been thrown in, around and out of cars, planes and go karts, and has taken our worn-out

feet and overworked stomachs to many a new place to bring you the best food, activities and travel destinations. We hope you tried a few of them.

But for us the best part of our jobs this year has been the people. Meeting you all and telling your stories is what makes us want to come to work every day, and this magazine wouldn't happen without your contribution. We thank each and every one of you.

Cheers to our first year and make sure you keep an eye out next month for some exciting new changes!

WORLD CLASS MINERS

IN THE HUNTER, COAL MINING IS MORE THAN JUST 'AN INDUSTRY'. AS WELL AS BEING THE BEDROCK OF THE LOCAL HUNTER ECONOMY, COAL MINING IN THE HUNTER INCLUDES THOUSANDS OF HARD WORKING MEN AND WOMEN WHO LIVE IN THE REGION AND CONTRIBUTE SO MUCH TO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Coal mining in the Hunter also includes the people who work in nearly 4,000 local Hunter businesses who keep our local mines supplied with everything from computers to sandwiches to toolboxes and heavy machinery. Our industry is built on the hard work of people that are making great contributions to mining and the Hunter community

Like Newcastle Knights winger Nathan Ross, who effectively walked out of an underground mine and into a Knights jersey. Ross commented recently, "Without mining I wouldn't have made it to Newcastle. I came down to Newcastle originally for the job in the mines and to play for a local league football team, so I guess I pretty much owe everything to mining."

Then there's the Marsh family where four generations of miners have worked underground in the Lower Hunter, starting in Wallsend in the 1800s.

And there's always new stories about people contributing to mining and our local community. People like 2017 Exceptional Young Woman in Mining award winner Chloe Piggford, who joined Glencore as a graduate in 2009 and by 2016 was promoted to Environment and Community Manager at Glencore's Integra mine.

Things are starting to look up for Hunter mining jobs. With the resurgence in coal prices and growing demand for our resources over the last 12 months, there has been an increase in confidence, and growth in local



Stephen Galilee
CEO, NSW Minerals Council

coal mining employment. Coal Services figures show an increase of nearly 700 coal mining production jobs in the Hunter since the recovery in prices began to take hold in August last year. Across NSW, the nearly 20,000 coal production jobs recorded in April 2017 was the highest level since the end of 2015.

This increase in local coal mining jobs is extremely welcome. More local people working in coal mining means stronger local communities and a stronger NSW coal industry.



Publisher
Shane Davey
shane@thecoalface.net.au
0408 759 088

Editor
Rebecca Connolly
rebecca@thecoalface.net.au
0408 769 699

Business Development Manager
Brett Collier
brett@thecoalface.net.au
0456 737 888

Editorial Contributor
Daniel James

Design
Catch Creative
@The Coalface
14B/159 John Street
Singleton NSW 2330
www.thecoalface.net.au

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RECENTLY IN PARLIAMENT, WE SUCCESSFULLY PASSED CHANGES TO MINING LAW. THIS WILL REDUCE RED TAPE FOR MINING OPERATORS AND MAINTAIN NSW'S WORLD-LEADING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS.

for mining operators who used to apply for a mining title every time a supporting mining activity was required on site.

Ancillary activities are key to supporting mines. They are the facilities and infrastructure used to directly facilitate primary mining operations, such as on site roads or railways used for transporting materials. They are crucial for a properly functioning and productive mining project.

The new approval process allows mining operators to consolidate their rehabilitation obligations for multiple ancillary mining activities onto a single title. Under the current framework, mining operators may be required to hold and manage the administration of a separate title for each ancillary mining activity that they rely on. This may be anywhere up to 20 titles, each incurring its own administrative cost and requiring significant time to manage.

NOW MINING OPERATORS CAN CONSOLIDATE MULTIPLE ANCILLARY MINING ACTIVITIES ON TO A SINGLE TITLE AND THEREFORE SIMPLIFY THE ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, AND REDUCE COSTS AND RED TAPE FOR INDUSTRY. THIS MEANS MORE MONEY TO SPEND IMPROVING OPERATIONS.

Our laws should give us clarity and certainty. It's important the NSW mining industry is guided by clear legislation and policy that balances a safe, sustainable development

and productive sector. As a result of these changes, we've streamlined the approval process for ancillary mining activities and cut the paperwork burden

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King: How many volunteers do we have for my evil army?

Squire: 384 my liege

King: Ok, round them up

Squire: 400 my liege

Environmental considerations will not be jeopardised due to the new approval process. All applications for ancillary mining activities will be subject to a full environmental assessment by the Division of Resources and Geoscience in my Department. Mining operators will still be required to provide assurances for land and water rehabilitation, to lessen any potential impacts of mining on the environment.

The NSW Government is improving these laws and regulations to ensure the best outcomes for the public and industry in terms of energy security, job opportunities and protection of the environment. Local communities and productive mining operations will continue to coexist with these laws providing a guiding framework.



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BEN MCDONALD,
APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

FROM THE GREAT OUTDOORS TO DEEP UNDERGROUND

WHEN BEN MCDONALD MADE THE SWITCH FROM STUDYING PE TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY TO STUDYING ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING AT HUNTER VALLEY TRAINING COMPANY, HE NEVER WOULD HAVE THOUGHT TRADING IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOR A LIFE UNDERGROUND WOULD SEE HIM WINNING THE 2017 APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR AWARD.

"I finished school in 2010 and got a pretty good result, so I thought I'd give university a crack," Ben says. "I enrolled to do a PE degree, but, uni just wasn't for me... there was too much theory and I prefer more practical, hands on work."

After speaking to his old man, and a few mates who are electricians, Ben decided to defer uni for the moment and enroll in an apprenticeship with Hunter Valley Training Company, in Rutherford. He soon secured a job as an electro-technician at Peabody's North Wambo underground mine.

"Working in the mining industry is great. It's a unique place to learn your trade and I've had a great deal of fun in doing so," says Ben. "I know that working underground isn't for everyone but to me that's what makes it so special. "Working underground at Wambo has been an awesome experience and the company have offered me a lot of support and made the last 4 years of my apprenticeship an unforgettable experience."

Ben also says it's the people in the industry that makes it so enjoyable to work in. "The blokes you work with certainly shape your character and this for me is one of the best parts," says Ben.

BEN'S RECENTLY TOOK OUT TOP HONOURS FOR BEST OVERALL APPRENTICE AT THE 2017 HUNTER REGIONAL APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIP ADVISORY AWARDS.

"I'm part of a great team up there, which makes it easy to work hard, because we support each other and get along really well," Ben explains. "Winning the apprentice of the year award makes me feel proud that I'm able to follow in my father and grandfather's footsteps, and gives me the motivation to better myself further in the mining industry."

His big win is also a big win for the mining industry as it shows the sort of talent and skills coming through into the industry, ensuring that mining continues to have a strong future here in the Hunter Valley.

"Hopefully stories like mine keeps the mining industry alive and shows what the job has to offer. I'd love to be in the industry, particularly in the Hunter, for many more years to come, so the more recognition the mining industry and related industries receive the better the outcome for us all."

Just goes to show how hard work and having a go gets results. Well done, Ben!

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CFMEU FIGHTS CASUALISATION

PREVENTING THE ONGOING CASUALISATION OF OUR INDUSTRY IS A CAUSE THAT THE CFMEU WILL NOT STOP FIGHTING FOR.

And in a win for the CFMEU, the Fair Work Commission has rejected the application by a major employers group to extend the casual employment provisions in the Black Coal award to Production and Engineering Employees.

At present, the employment of casuals under the Award is restricted to the classification of Staff employees. In a move to spread casualisation to all employees throughout Australia's black coal industry, the Australian Industry Group took their fight to the Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission but were defeated by the strong case mounted by the CFMEU.

General Secretary Andrew Vickers welcomed the win. "This was an important battle to hold the line against the employer's drive to further casualise our coal industry but we can't afford to rest on its laurels."

"We know the employers will regroup and mount further challenges to our security of employment. We know they will try and attack the Award that underpins our basic and hard-won entitlements and conditions. But one thing that our membership can be sure of is that our Union will fight the employers attacks every inch of the way to protect our jobs, conditions and rights at work."

THE CFMEU'S STRONG OPPOSITION OF CASUALISATION IS ALSO EVIDENT IN THE ONGOING ROLLING STRIKES AT GLENCORE'S UPPER HUNTER MINES AS THEY CAMPAIGN FOR IMPROVED ENTERPRISE AGREEMENTS.

The July meeting at Singleton Showground had 1,400 Members attend the meeting, which was a follow up to the one held in June where in excess of 1,000 miners were present.

The main common sticking points in the ongoing disputes according to the CFMEU are:

- Refusal for adequate Job Security Clauses – on the back of Glencore's ongoing campaign to replace permanent jobs with insecure contracting jobs at all sites.
- Requirement to have commitments to substantially limit the P&E workforce employed as casual contractors – i.e. permanent jobs for contractors.
- Improved redundancy provisions in line with other Operators.

"These are the three key issues that are causing disruptions along with a number of other issues associated with each site that Glencore Management has refused to consider, for in some cases years. The Members have made it very clear that the current situation is unacceptable and the Members are prepared to stand up and do something about it", said District President Peter Jordan.



PETER JORDAN ADDRESSES THE CROWD AT SINGLETON

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A blonde girl and her boyfriend are at a bar watching the news when a story comes on about a man standing on a bridge threatening to jump. The blonde says, "I bet you \$100 he doesn't jump."

Her boyfriend takes the bet and the man eventually jumps. After the blonde pays her boyfriend he admits to her, "I saw this on the news an hour ago, take your money back."

She replies, "I saw it too. I just never thought he would jump twice in one day!"

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EMF SEES AN INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY WORTH INVESTING IN



GRANT ANDERSON & JASON ANDERSON

TWO WELL-KNOWN AND RESPECTED MUSWELLBROOK MINING SUPPLIERS HAVE DECIDED TO GO FROM RUNNING A BUSINESS TO OWNING ONE BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IN THE POTENTIAL OF OUR INDUSTRY.

Despite the many challenges and complexities that comes with doing business in the coal mining industry, these guys have decided to go for it. They are continuing on after corporate restructuring within their parent company saw a shift in focus away from Muswellbrook, despite successfully and profitably setting up and running the business.

BASED IN MUSWELLBROOK NSW, EMF GROUP IS A LOCALLY OWNED AND OPERATED BUSINESS THAT PROVIDES PROFESSIONAL ELECTRICAL, MECHANICAL AND FABRICATION MAINTENANCE AND INSTALLATION SERVICES THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES.

Jason Anderson and Grant Anderson (no relation) have worked hard for their place in the industry and community. Both long-term residents, they have run businesses and built their lives here. They own homes and investments here, they are raising their families here, they have friends here, they have a history here, and despite some tough times, it's a life worth fighting for.

Jason said, "Weighing up a new direction and the possibility of a move away, when push came to shove our ties to this industry and region convinced us this was a decision worth making. Personally and professionally it was an opportunity we realised we wanted to take to secure the futures of our families and a few of the people we work with. We believe in the future of the coal industry."

@ The Coalface loves seeing the people we work with having a go and having worked with these guys for many years we are in no doubt they are in for a successful future – best of luck boys.

GOING GLOBAL

THE UPPER HUNTER MINING DIALOGUE IS SHARING ITS EXPERTISE WITH A GLOBAL AUDIENCE.

In August, Dialogue committee and working group members will meet with visiting International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) representatives to share Dialogue community engagement learnings. ICMM is an international organisation dedicated to a safe, fair and sustainable mining industry. ICMM has as members 23 mining and metals companies and over 30 regional and commodities associations.

DIALOGUE CHAIRMAN DAVID O'BRIEN SAID THE ATTENDANCE OF DIALOGUE MEMBERS AT THE ICMM WORKSHOP AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED THE ENORMOUS WORTH OF THE DIALOGUE.

"The purpose of the workshop is that ICMM would like to learn from the UHMD," Mr O'Brien said. "ICMM would like to use the learnings from the UHMD to inform the materials they are preparing on community engagement which will be used in mining jurisdictions around the world. This is a valuable opportunity to showcase the UHMD on a global stage and help other communities in the process."

The Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue was formed in 2011 as a vehicle for the mining industry and community to collaborate on methods to minimise the impacts of mining. Since its formation, the Dialogue has conducted extensive community engagement activities, the lessons from which will be shared at the ICMM workshop.

DIALOGUE REPRESENTATIVES SHARING THEIR KNOWLEDGE AT THE AUGUST WORKSHOP WILL CONSIST OF COMMUNITY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES.

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PUBLISHERS OPINION

IN LIGHT OF THIS BEING 12 MONTHS BACK IN BUSINESS FOR @ THE COALFACE, THIS MONTH I AM GOING TO SOUND LIKE AN INSURANCE SALESMAN, DOCTOR, PSYCHIATRIST AND FINANCIAL ADVISOR ALL ROLLED INTO ONE. AND AS I AM COMPLETELY UNQUALIFIED OR EVEN A GOOD ROLE MODEL IN ANY OF THESE CATEGORIES YOU SHOULD LISTEN CLOSELY TO THE ADVICE I HAVE TO GIVE.

Being ten foot tall and bullet proof, along with the gift of eternal life, I've always understood I have plenty of time to worry about the important stuff later in life.

AND THEN I REALIZED I AM NEARLY FIFTY EVEN THOUGH BEING 25 FELT LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY – WHERE DID ALL THAT TIME GO?

Recently it has dawned on me that life passes by in the blink of an eye and if you don't keep an eye on the important stuff and have some kind of future plan, then you are setting yourself up for tough times.

It might be the realisation that I will be 48 in less than a month and without sounding morbid, I'll most

likely shuffle off in somewhere between 20 and 40 years, sooner if I don't kick the fags.

So what am I not about to preach about here? I don't care if you are 25, 55 or at any other age in your life. Get some kind of plan going and no I don't think the first few below are much chop:

Option 1: Pray

Option 2: Go to the pub and drink yourself to death.

Option 3: Commit a not too heinous crime that will ensure you get a roof over your head and three square meals a day for life.

Option 4: Take control and action. Taking control and action is possible at any stage in life, it really is. It might be and usually is that one thing leads to another and another and so on. So ask yourself 'What are the big challenges in life?' Write them down in biggest to smallest order. Health? Wealth? Happiness? What ever it is, even acknowledging it is a start many never make.

AND HERE IS THE BIG ONE! DON'T TACKLE IT ALONE.

Whatever the challenge, there people there to guide you and all you have to do is ask. So today is the day, go to the doctor, seek financial advice, talk to someone and make that decision that has been holding back your happiness.

Tackle the big stuff first and the smaller stuff should take care of itself. Life is short, live long.

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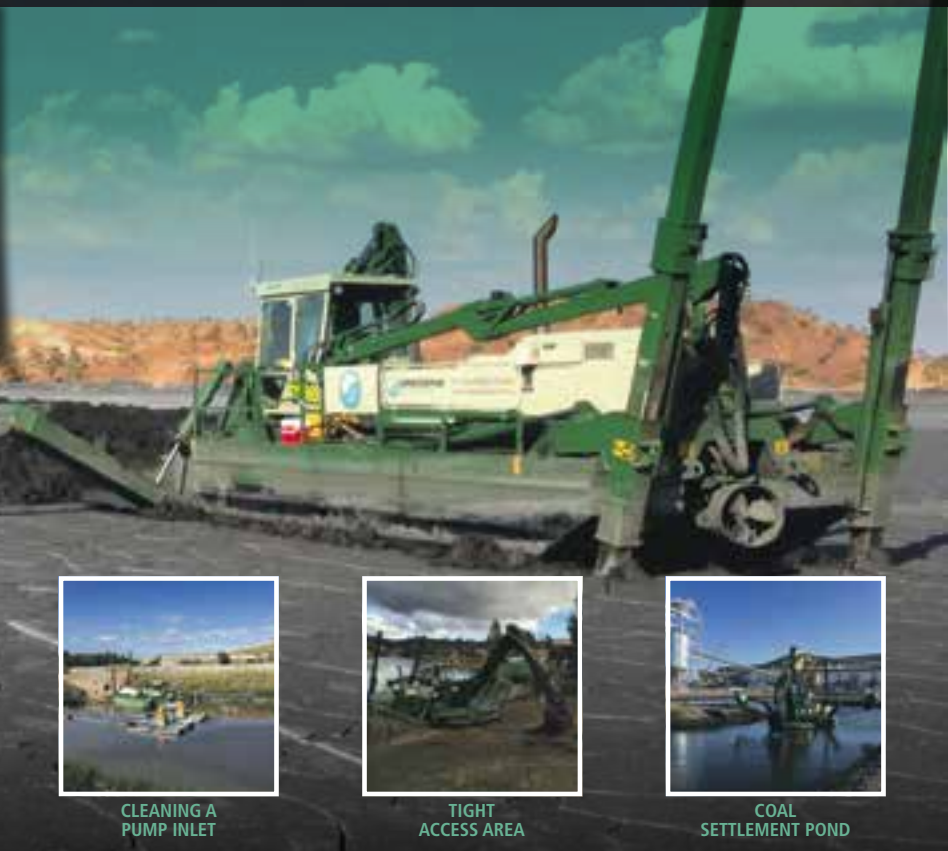
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COAL COMPANIES COULD FIRE A
NEW LOCAL POWER STATION

The Future
NEXT EXIT

DESPITE BIG LEAPS IN RENEWABLES, MOST OF US KNOW THAT WE ARE STILL A LONG WAY OFF BEFORE IT CAN SUPPLY ALL OUR NEEDS, SO FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OR TWO, COAL WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN MAKING SURE OUR SOCIETY KEEPS RUNNING.

In the Hunter it is well known that the billions of dollars in infrastructure we have in and around our power stations is slated to be phased out starting just a few years from now. Why? Could our coal producers and biggest electricity users come together in a joint venture to fund and build a new High Efficiency Low Emissions (HELE) coal fired power station? Most likely yes.

GHD estimate a current construction cost of \$2.2 billion for 1000 MW modern HELE or ultra super critical black coal plant based on savings accrued from utilising a brownfield site and sourcing specialised equipment from Asia. This demonstrates that HELE coal plants – which would have operating lives of several decades – are viable and affordable options for replacing Australia’s existing ageing coal fired power stations.

The report confirms that USC coal generation can deliver on the priorities of affordability, reliability and low emissions.

As an industry we not only understand this technology, we currently supply a large chunk of the best coal in the world to fuel these power stations in other parts of the world. So let’s come together and build a power station that is the very best on the planet. One that shows just how well this technology

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Son: Okay I was watching Kung Fu Panda! The robot slaps the son.
Son: Okay I was watching violent movies!
Dad: What?! When I was your age I never watched those movies! The robot slaps the dad.
Mum: Haha, after all, he is your son. The robot slaps the mum....

works and how coal can be a part of the future.

IMAGINE IF EACH COAL COMPANY CONTRIBUTED BASED ON THEIR CURRENT COAL PRODUCING MARKET SHARE. BIG POWER USERS, SUCH AS TOMAGO ALUMINIUM, COULD ALSO TAKE A PIECE OF THE PROJECT AND CONTRIBUTE MONEY.

Our coal companies could reasonably recoup their investments through their proportionate supply of coal to power the station along with the enduring profit dividends they will receive through the sale of the electricity generated.

Partner users like Tomago get the win of reliable energy supply and most likely a net reduction in power costs when investment profits are taken into account.

Government could also chip in if the coal industry investment builds a case too compelling to dismiss. By this stage any shortfalls would most likely be met from international investment.

If we were to do this then the goal should not be to make it one of the best in the world, but the best in the world. Build it on a platform of constant innovation.

Take Australia from a catch up position to world leader and secure energy security. Just a thought.



RESCUE LEGEND

THIS MONTH THE WESTPAC RESCUE HELICOPTER SERVICE UNVEILED THE CLIFF MARSH OAM OPERATIONS ROOM AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW PURPOSE-BUILT AEROMEDICAL BASE AT BELMONT AIRPORT TO HONOUR THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FORMER CHAIRMAN.

Cliff is no ordinary bloke and was a founding father of the Rescue Service before going on to become Chairman of the Board for 25 years from 1992 until his retirement earlier this year.

WRHS Chief Executive Officer Richard Jones said. “The Operations Room is where every mission starts and critical decisions are made, so it is very fitting that we name it in Cliff’s honour.”

“IT HAS BEEN MY GREAT PRIVILEGE TO SERVE AS CHAIRMAN AND DIRECTOR OF THIS SPECIAL ORGANISATION. I HAVE WORKED WITH WONDERFUL DIRECTORS, MANAGEMENT, STAFF AND OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS OVER

THE YEARS AND I BELIEVE OUR COMMUNITY IS IN SAFE HANDS MOVING FORWARD. I’LL ALSO BE FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF WESTPAC, AND AS A MINER MYSELF, THE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION THE MINING INDUSTRY HAS MADE TO THE SERVICE,” CLIFF SAID.

Cliff continued, “I cherish many memories, but those I am most fond of are the wonderful relationships and friendships. From day one, this service has been a community owned asset and the relationship we have with our community has been a most inspiring and important factor. Our Service simply wouldn’t be what it is today without such loyal community

support,” he said.

Mr. John Davis, his successor to the position of Chairman said, “This is a truly historic moment for Cliff and the Service. He has made a remarkable contribution which we will likely never see again.”

To say his has been a life well lived is an understatement to say the least. In addition to the service, Cliff has an extensive history and experience in mine management, personnel management and training including 5 years as Personnel Manager, BHP Mines. A pretty full dance card and life in anyone’s language.

In Surf Lifesaving, he has given his all in competition, coaching,

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administration, team management and community special events management. His list of achievement is long; Life Member Swansea Belmont SLSC, Hunter Branch SLSA, Surf Life Saving NSW and Surf Life Saving Australia and is an inductee of Hunter Region Sporting Hall of Fame and Surf Life Saving Australia Hall of Fame.

CLIFF HAS PASSIONATELY FOUGHT TO IMPROVE THE STANDARDS OF AEROMEDICAL SEARCH, RESCUE AND INTER-HOSPITAL TRANSFER FOR COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT NORTHERN NSW.

Now that Cliff has a bit more time on his hands he told @ The Coalface he will still be keeping busy fiddling around in the house and garden. Cliff’s got 6 grandchildren to focus on also and they’ve even talked him into going snow skiing this year.

It goes without saying a few cold beers and Captain Morgan rums will be raised by Cliff to reflect on his amazing achievements. From every one of us...Cheers Cliff!

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DAMIEN RYBA

'I LOVE MY JOB'

FOR MANY OF US THOSE ARE WORDS WE DON'T SAY VERY OFTEN, IF AT ALL. FOR DAMIEN RYBA, THOSE WORDS ARE NOW HIS DAILY MANTRA.

Damien is an Environment & Community Officer for Glencore's Mangoola Open Cut and like many in our industry, his passion and commitment to his work make it more than just a job. It's a calling.

From when he was young, Damien loved being outdoors and spending time in the bush. He was interested in botany and science and the environment. Or in the language of boys, learning plant names, catching frogs and lizards, walking up mountains, and spending plenty of nights out in the swag.

But we all know what the pressure can be like when we are young to make the right choice when deciding on a career path. The advice of teachers and parents can often drown out the silent voice of our dreams and this was the case for Damien.

For 20 years Damien had a very successful career in engineering. He went to work every day and enjoyed the job, but something was missing. Passion. In 2010, the call of the wild became so loud that Damien couldn't ignore it anymore.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF HIS FAMILY, DAMIEN QUIT HIS JOB AND STARTED AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE IN 2011.

The decision came with its share of trepidation but Damien says he felt like he had to do it. "I was close to 40 and so I knew it was now or never. I was prepared to work hard because I knew there were no guarantees. But I also had faith in my abilities that things would work out okay."

Damien's dedication to his studies soon paid off and he caught the eye of Xstrata and was invited into their vacation student program. Damien knew this was his shot and he couldn't blow it so he put in long hours of study to make sure he received top marks. And at the end of his degree the now Glencore offered him a job on the Graduate program, and then a full

time role at Mangoola. Finally, Damien was right where he had always wanted to be.

For the last few years Damien has been working on the benchmark rehabilitation program at Mangoola. Working on the rehabilitation of mined areas and the surrounding offset lands involves all the things that Damien has been passionate about since he was young. Although it's taken him all these years to get here, Damien says there's no better time.

"REHABILITATION OF MINED LANDS IS AN EXCITING FIELD TO BE IN RIGHT NOW. WITH THE EVOLVING SCIENCE AND RESEARCH, THE INDUSTRY IS NOW DOING REHABILITATION THAT IS OF MUCH HIGHER QUALITY THAN WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE PAST AND EVERY DAY OUR STANDARDS ARE CONTINUING TO IMPROVE."

So far, Mangoola have completed 425

hectares of rehabilitated land since they began in 2011 and the work they are doing is not just meeting the industry standard. It's blowing that standard out of the water. But it's not without its share of hits and misses. Sometimes something is a clear success from the outset, but they've also trialed some things that haven't worked out. But Damien says they learn just as much from these and it all contributes to the final result.

"We believe we've really raised the bar here at Mangoola and it is an effort that the entire mine has been a part of. All the departments from planning to surveying to mining, plus the management and the contractors, all work together and all of us are proud of what we've achieved. Working with these great people who care about what we are doing is just one more reason I love to come to work each day."

But what does he love the most? Hands down it's getting to spend time out in the field where there's always something different to do. "One day I might be out supervising habitat tree felling and catching lace monitors and possums to release into our offset areas. The next day I'm overseeing the handplanting or sourcing of seeds with our contractors. And then the day after might see me taking some school kids or mine reps through to share the work we've done. Not a bad way to spend your day if you ask me."

DAMIEN SAYS THAT HE FINDS ALL HIS WORK REWARDING, BUT SOMETIMES IT'S THE SMALL THINGS THAT GIVE HIM THE MOST SATISFACTION.

"I'll be out in our rehab areas and see the ground orchids flowering. These are a threatened species that we've salvaged and translocated and we didn't know if it would work or not until we tried. Or I'll be out doing weed inspections and see mobs of wallabies, bronze wing pigeons nesting and wedge tailed eagles soaring overhead. Things like this are proof that we're doing it right in rehabilitation."

Damien says that at the end of the day he now comes home from work and is proud to share what he's done with his family and friends. "It's a great feeling working at a mine that has such a strong focus on the quality of their mine rehabilitation. At the end of the day I can honestly say I'm contributing towards leaving a better legacy for the future. For me, work doesn't get much better than that."



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WHAT’S NEW AT



@ THE COALFACE CAUGHT UP WITH AIMEX EVENT DIRECTOR BRANDON WARD TO HEAR ABOUT THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT WILL BE SHOWCASED ON THE FLOOR THIS YEAR.

This year more than 300 exhibiting companies are set to showcase their products and services at AIMEX, including GM Holden, APC Technology, Winder, Siemag, MTG, Nautitech, Airbus Defence and Space, IFM Efector, Insitu Pacific, and Austdac Pty Ltd.

“From mining and extracting and materials handling, to automation and minerals processing, the AIMEX exhibition floor offers an unparalleled opportunity for visitors to connect and interact with companies and their products.” Brandon said. “We have companies showcasing the very latest technologies and I’ll let you in on a few that you don’t want to miss checking out this year.”

RENISHAW will showcase its new Void Scanner which is designed to produce fast, accurate 3D laser scans of underground voids as well as its Boretrak, which enables users to measure and audit borehole

deviation from proposed designs to enable informed decisions to optimise blasts.

HEDWELD ENGINEERING will showcase its Trilift® range of component handling equipment and Safe-Away® range of Ladder and Stair Access Systems.

TOMRA SORTING MINING will be launching its brand new multi-channel laser sorting technology which will unlock new opportunities for quartz and gold processing and sorting.

GLOBAL PUMPS will have the Verderflex VF Series peristaltic hose pump on display.

DAVIES WEAR PLATE SYSTEMS will be launching their new wear side only attachment system.

So get yourself to the Sydney Showgrounds from August 29 – 31 where you will see firsthand the innovative and cutting edge technology that is helping to shape the future of our industry.



AIMEX EVENT DIRECTOR
BRANDON WARD



TURNING BRIGHT IDEAS INTO REALITY

EVER DESIGNED A ONE-OFF TOOL THAT’S BLOODY USEFUL IN YOUR WORKSHOP BUT POOR IN TERMS OF ENGINEERED DESIGN AND BUILD? WELL HUNTER ENGINEERING INNOVATION HAS STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE TO TAKE YOUR IDEAS TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

For a long time, Quarry Mining has had qualified in-house engineers focused on the design and quality control of their manufactured products. Recently Quarry made the decision to take their skills to market and establish a “Design and Create Centre”. With a “no job too small or too tricky” approach, they are now undertaking the design and build of bespoke tools that have until now been the bane of many people’s existence to get made.

DO YOU HAVE A TOOL THAT IS MOCKED UP OR IS A BIT OF A “BACKYARD JOB” BUT IS REALLY ONE OF THE HANDIEST THINGS IN THE YARD?

Most likely, it is not fit for purpose and does not have the engineering design, plant safety files or introductions to site that it should in our modern workplace.

Using their CAD modelling and design software and 3D printing capabilities Quarry can now provide certified designs and prototypes in a cost-effective way, eliminating the need for many costly manufacturing

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and fabricating iterations. Once the solution is tailored (i.e. 3D printed) just right, engineers team up with the workshop and begin to fabricate. Once the tool is ready for testing, site trials can be done with their engineers and trades team, and that includes a qualified safety person who can deliver all the documents you need to implement a new tool seamlessly into the workplace.

The idea is that having the ability to design, build and test, small but challenging projects like these in-house, will save their clients the significant time and trouble it takes to engage, manage and bridge the communication gap between different design consultants and fabrication work companies.

Hunter innovation has always been alive and well at Quarry and this latest initiative is testament to their belief in the ability and future of Hunter manufacturing as well.



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KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON



SFF UPPER HUNTER CANDIDATE, JOHN PRESTON

No matter what the sun or wind does today, NSW will import somewhere between 10% and 20% of its electricity from another State, probably Queensland. This summer when peak demand arrives in February, no one is really sure whether we will make it through without load shedding.

We live in an electric world where civilisation is made possible by the reliable supply of power. Every day, new housing, new business and new people arrive adding to the demand. A State that exports energy is now a beggar at the electricity table.

In a few short years, NSW like Victoria is scheduled to close some of its baseload coal fired power stations, some of which are not just old enough to vote, but they could hold Seniors cards.

PERHAPS THERE IS A FUTURE WITH ZERO EMISSIONS POWER GENERATION, BUT IT IS DECADES AWAY AND WE HAVE TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON UNTIL THEN. NO OTHER TECHNOLOGY OFFERS BASELOAD POWER SUPPLY WITH GUARANTEED

MEET JOHN PRESTON, UPPER HUNTER PARTY CANDIDATE FROM THE SHOOTERS, FISHERS AND FARMERS PARTY AND HEAR HIS VIEW ON THE FUTURE OF COAL IN THE HUNTER.

PERFORMANCE. COAL FIRED POWER IS IT.

The Hunter is the beating heart of power generation in NSW and has all the comparative advantage in remaining so with the infrastructure, supply chain and skills base. To turn our backs on that would be the greatest act of commercial vandalism in the history of not just this state but the entire country.

Whilst everyone is reading reports or writing them, our position on this matter is clear. We will insist on power generation remaining in the Hunter. That is its natural home in NSW and the public interest demands it. We have the best lignite coal, best people and best infrastructure.

We maintain that the needs of NSW base load power is best met with coal fired power, and that will require new generation capacity to be constructed with the latest technology for efficiency and pollution reduction.

I have seen no business case to

support the proposition that this is not viable in NSW. What I can tell you that today as you use electricity, some of the demand is being met by the four super critical power stations constructed in QLD and they seem to be as profitable as they ever were. If there is some magic that makes a power stations viable north of the border but a failure south of it, I don't know what it is.

I do have a more plausible explanation. Someone needs to make a decision. We have. We will support coal power generation for the Hunter come what may. The easiest excuse for Governments is to offer a lack of resources, money or to ask everyone to wait for the next report from the next expert, or to be patient while the cost of renewables falls whilst your electricity bill rises.

When a Government, like you and me, really wants to do something, they find the time, the money or the political will. For me, there is no soul searching. I am with coal power generation in the Hunter.

HUNTERWOOD

PARALLEL ECONOMICS

HOLLYWOOD IN THE HUNTER

LIGHTS, CAMERA ACTION! AUSTRALIA IS WELL KNOWN FOR PUNCHING ABOVE ITS WEIGHT, AND SUCCEEDING ON THE BIG SCREEN AND BEHIND THE CAMERA IN HOLLYWOOD. SO, PUTTING THE STAR STRUCK RAZZLE DAZZLE ASIDE FOR A MOMENT, IT'S NOT A HUGE STRETCH FOR US TO CREATE AN INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED CENTRE FOR MOVIE PRODUCTION ON A MINE SITE IN THE HUNTER.

Somewhere out Bulga - Mt Thorley way would be the perfect spot. Think for a minute just how many large tracts of underutilised land are sitting on mine sites right now. Now think for a minute how much world class accommodation, facilities and skilled labour lie within our community.

Proximity to Sydney, a reasonable airport at Cessnock, a ton of accommodation in Pokolbin – all the necessary supporting infrastructure and a lot of talent is already in place to create a world-famous movie mecca that the film industry would take seriously.

IT'S OUR GUESS THAT BUILDING BIG SHEDS FOR MINE MAINTENANCE WOULDN'T BE HUGEY DIFFERENT TO BUILDING

HUGE SHEDS, OR STUDIOS AS THEY CALL THEM IN HOLLYWOOD, TO CREATE BIG BUDGET BLOCKBUSTERS.

Put all this in the context of available land and a lot of outdoor shooting would easily be accommodated as well. Given that a small movie costs in the tens of millions and a big one in the hundreds or more, having a big chunk of that cash being invested here wouldn't be such a bad idea.

I have a long-lost relative on my dad's side called Bruce Davey, he's the business partner of a young bloke called Mel Gibson. Together they have made a few reasonably successful little home movies including Braveheart and more recently Hacksaw Ridge. I should try and track down his number. They are both ordinary Aussies who have proven this kind of big thinking can work. Many others would have plenty of direct contacts as well and the Government could easily get it on the table as well.

"AND THE ACADEMY AWARD FOR BEST PLACE TO MAKE A MOVIE GOES TO.... THE HUNTER!"



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WHO WILL BE CROWNED AT CROWNE?

THE 2017 NSW MINERALS COUNCIL HEALTH, SAFETY, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD FINALISTS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED AND ANTICIPATION IS BUILDING TO SEE WHO WILL BE CROWNED THE WINNER AT CROWNE PLAZA ON MONDAY AUGUST 14.

The Awards Dinner is just one of the many events that make up the 2017 NSW Mining HSEC Conference. It's a busy three days on August 14, 15 and 16, with a jam-packed conference program where industry leaders, senior government representatives and HSEC professionals share their wealth of knowledge and industry insights.

The Exhibitors trade hall is opened on the Monday and Tuesday and is a great networking opportunity for the 500 delegates expected to attend. But the showcase event is the Awards Dinner which acknowledges those in our industry who have shown innovation and excellence in 'workers health', 'mine safety', 'environmental sustainability' or 'community engagement'.

“Our awards entrants were all of a very high calibre, demonstrating mining's commitment to innovative approaches to solving problems and the pursuit of excellence,” NSW Minerals Council CEO Stephen Galilee said.

“These awards are an important part of our industry's continuous improvement and will deliver better outcomes for our workforce and local communities. Congratulations to all of our awards finalists for 2017.”

Finalists - Health Excellence
Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG): NCIG Bounce Program
Coal & Allied and Coal Services Health: Seat Weight Limit Project

Finalists - Safety Excellence
Evolution - Cowal Gold Mine: Project Arrive Alive
Centennial Coal - Myuna Colliery: Myuna Save Our Cables Program

Finalists - Environment Excellence
Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group: NCIG Offset Delivery
Peabody Energy Australia: Current Rehabilitation Practices at Wilpinjong Coal Mine

Finalists - Community Excellence
Rio Tinto Coal & Allied: Enterprise Facilitation
Evolution Mining, Cowal Gold Operation (Cowal): Project Bridge

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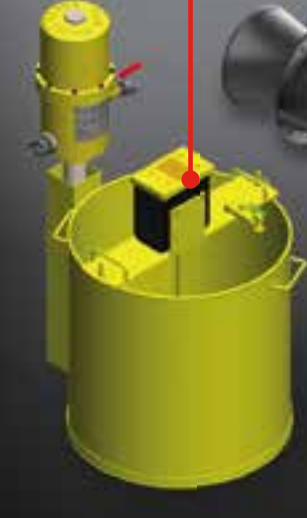
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MINE MUSE

WHEN YOU THINK OF MINE SITES YOU DON'T OFTEN IMAGINE THEM AS BEING THE INSPIRATION FOR ARTISTS AND WRITERS. WELL THINK AGAIN.

Recently the Newcastle University Gallery showcased the exhibition of Penny Dunstan titled Shadowlands II. Penny's exhibition is a set of works showing the transformation of landscapes by open-cut mining in the Upper Hunter.

Using drawing, photography, soils and collected artefacts, Penny's says her work is about the process of reintegrating rehabilitated land through human imagination and bringing together art and science.

Penny's 2-year PhD research project was only made possible due to the Bloomfield Group opening their doors for her and allowing Penny access to Rix's Creek Mine. "I can't thank Bloomfield enough for

so generously allowing me access to Rix's Creek Mine. I especially want to thank John Hindmarsh for giving me the freedom to explore and for always welcoming me back again and again. This would not be possible without them." Penny said.




THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT BLOOMFIELD HAS SHARED THEIR STORY OR OPENED THEIR DOORS TO THE ARTISTIC COMMUNITY.

Late last year, artist Linda Greedy showed her exhibition at Maitland Regional Art Gallery. Her exhibition showcased the colour and beauty of Rix's Creek mine and the spirit of community, friendship and family that is prevalent at this family operated mine.

Author and Historian Rosemary Melville best shared the 80 years of Bloomfield's history with her book titled The Bloomfield Story: Mining Memories. It tells the story of Bloomfield's ability to survive and prosper by working together as a family and the contribution they have made to Hunter mining over the years.

While many companies keep their mines sites under lock and key, the openness of the Bloomfield Group is refreshing and allows art and mining to come together in a way we don't often get to see.

And who's to says art and mining don't belong together? Even our Minister for Resources Don Harwin is proof that art and mining can be brought together, as he also happens to be Minister for the Arts.



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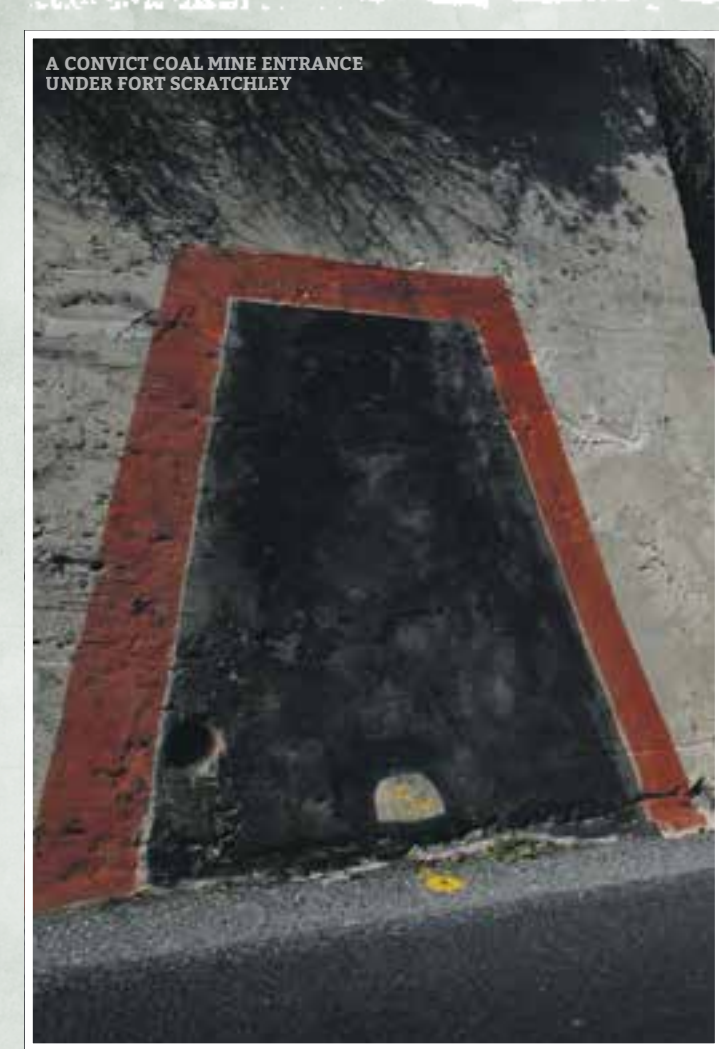
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166,000 CONVICTS WERE TRANSPORTED TO AUSTRALIA IN THE EARLY DAYS OF SETTLEMENT, SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT CONVICTS PLAYED AN INSTRUMENTAL PART IN THE FORMATION OF THE HUNTER COAL INDUSTRY.

The first recording of the discovery of coal in Australia was by a group of escaped convicts in 1791 as they were travelling from Port Jackson. The convicts were led by William and Mary Bryant and the coal was discovered near Newcastle though the actual location is unknown. Mary Bryant is given credit for being the first white woman to cook with Australian coal. No record of what she cooked exists though our bet is it was used for a sausage sizzle.

In 1797, Lieutenant John Shortland was sent north to recapture a party of escaped convicts. On his return, he entered a river which he then named the Hunter River after the New South Wales' Governor, John Hunter. Coal was found in abundance in the area and with the river offering easy access it became the perfect location to begin extracting and exporting coal.

By the turn of the century the mouth of the Hunter



River was being visited by diverse groups, including coal diggers, timber-cutters and escaped convicts. Enterprising traders were taking coal to export to Sydney but only a small amount of coal mining was being conducted by the Government. The lengthy delays of contact between the colony and Britain meant that it took two years after Shortland's discovery before the first official coal export.

IN 1799, COAL MINED USING CONVICT LABOUR WAS SHIPPED TO BENGAL AND BECAME THE FIRST MINERAL EXPORTED FROM AUSTRALIA.

This indifferent approach to mining all changed in 1800 when Governor Philip King arrived in New South Wales. He planned to exploit the various coal discoveries that had been made and start exporting the coal on a large scale. He issued a General Order declaring all the coal to be exclusive property of the crown and forbidding private parties from mining. In 1801, a convict camp called King's Town

was established to mine coal and cut timber, though the settlement closed less than a year later. Evidence suggests this was due to a failure in management of the convicts.

The easily accessible coal at the Hunter River was mined haphazardly until 1804. In that year, a rebellion by convicts at Castle Hill caused Governor King to set up a permanent settlement to hold desperate, dangerous or recalcitrant convicts. The settlement was named Coal River, also Kingstown and then renamed Newcastle, after England's famous coal port and was to become the centre for development of the coal trade.

NEWCASTLE GAINED A REPUTATION AS A "HELLHOLE" AS IT WAS A PLACE WHERE THE MOST DANGEROUS CONVICTS WERE SENT TO DIG IN THE COAL MINES AS HARSH PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR CRIMES. AS A PENAL COLONY, THE MILITARY RULE WAS HARSH AND PUNISHMENTS WERE SEVERE.

Military rule in Newcastle ended in 1823. After removal of the last convicts in 1823, the town was freed from the infamous influence of the penal law and not long after the government allowed private companies to commence mining operations.

'AVE A LAUGH WITH

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Three vampires walk into a bar. The first one says, "I'll have a pint of blood."

The second one says, "I'll have one, too."

The third one says, "I'll have a pint of plasma."

The bartender says, "So, that'll be two Bloods and a Blood Lite!"

AE ALFABS



CELEBRATING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

RIO TINTO HAS CELEBRATED THE SUCCESS OF ITS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS WITH AN EVENT HELD AT THE SINGLETON RUGBY CLUB ON JULY 27.

The evening brought together more than 100 people in acknowledgement of their contribution to building a strong and sustainable community in the Hunter Valley.

Rio Tinto Coal Australia (RTCA) managing director Sinead Kaufman said the partnerships were essential to driving the development of the region.

"We are proud that for almost 20 years our Rio Tinto Hunter Valley Community Development Fund (CDF) has invested over \$15 million to support more than 120 projects in the Hunter Valley across the areas of health, education, environment and economic development. We could not achieve these great outcomes without the support of our dedicated and valued partners and we are delighted to recognise their hard work with this event," Sinead said.

THE EVENT WAS ATTENDED BY NUMEROUS PARTNERS WHO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO THANK RIO TINTO FOR THEIR ONGOING SPONSORSHIP WHICH HAS PROVIDED LONG-LASTING BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY.

Outward Bound Australia business development director

Eva Breidenbach spoke warmly of working in partnership with the company.

"Rio Tinto has enabled Outward Bound to offer scholarships to children in the Hunter Valley by funding their fees and transportation to the Tweed Valley to participate in our programs. We are delighted to have the opportunity to open up new experiences for local children," Eva said.

Rio Tinto Scholarship Program recipients Nicholas and Jackson Hough attended the event. Both are now students at the University of Newcastle with Nicholas studying Chemical Engineering and Jackson undertaking a degree in a Mechatronic Engineering.

"The program has provided great support to both of us. I'm in my fourth year of study and Nicholas is in his second. The scholarships have helped us cover a lot of costs, particularly travel, to attend university," Jackson said.

Other partners in attendance on the night included the Richmond Vale Railway Museum, Cancer Council, Sirolli Institute, Singleton Australian Rules Football Club and Singleton Golf Club.



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BLAZE OF GLORY

THE ULAN VOLUNTEERS HARD AT WORK

WORKING WITH THE BLAZE AID ORGANISATION, APPRENTICES AND EMPLOYEES FROM GLENCORE'S ULAN COAL COMPLEX HAVE BEEN HARD AT WORK PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS AFFECTED BY THE SIR IVAN BUSHFIRES IN FEBRUARY.

Daniel Nelson, Electrical Coordinator at Ulan West underground mine, said that when they saw what BlazeAid was doing to assist our local farmers and give them a glimpse of hope, everyone wanted to chip in and help.

"We initially went to visit the BlazeAid base camp at Dunedoo Showground to find out more information and how we could best help. The 4th Year apprentices discussed ideas on how they could give back and donate their own time to make a difference. The decision was made to camp at Dunedoo and go out with BlazeAid to remove and rebuild burnt out fencing."

THE ULAN TEAM PROVIDED LABOUR AND MATERIALS TO HELP REBUILD KILOMETRES OF FENCING DESTROYED BY THE FIRES THAT SWEEPED THROUGH THE AREA DEVASTATING OVER 55,000 HECTARES OF LAND AND DESTROYING OVER 5000KM OF FENCING.

In addition to the apprentices, volunteers from staff also spent a night camping out and a day of work with the apprentices. Each night they would pull out the swags and join the BlazeAid volunteers, most of whom were retirees from all around the country working 6 days a week while

living in their caravans or RV's.

THE COMBINED VOLUNTEER EFFORT HAS CONTRIBUTED ALMOST 26,000 HOURS OF LABOUR, CLEARED 269 KILOMETRES OF DAMAGED FENCING AND REBUILT 210 KILOMETRES.

"It is a truly great organisation and after talking to the farmers, the hope and support this assistance is giving farmers who've lost so much is heart-warming," Daniel said.

Since then, Ulan has continued to support BlazeAid with their latest donation being the delivery of a semi-trailer full of steel pipes (almost 1km of them) and the same amount of conveyor belting for use in the recovery effort. The steel pipes will be cut up and used as straining posts in the new fencing.



BLAZE AID'S LAURIE DAWSON TAKING DELIVERY OF THE LATEST DONATION

SCHOOLYARD BLITZ



THANKS TO GLENCORE'S BULGA COAL, BROKE PUBLIC SCHOOL'S EATING AREA TURNED INTO A SMORGASBORD OF IMPROVEMENTS RECENTLY.

Broke Public School had a small request, asking Glencore's Bulga Coal

for assistance with some additional tables. It wasn't long before a team of Bulga

employees and apprentices, as well as builders from ECH Maintenance got together and a schoolyard blitz was underway.

The team got busy

installing new table seating and benches provided by Glencore and the school's P&C, renovating the area with fresh paint and new roofing panels, topping up the sand pit, rebuilding garden beds and laying down a concrete slab for use as a giant chess game. "With enrolments at 85 this year, the school had really outgrown existing arrangements in the eating area, which contained

three tables that we'd installed for them back in 2013," project coordinator Teegan Hayward said. "But we thought that putting in some extra tables wasn't much of a working bee, so we included a number of other projects the school had on its wish list and the kids were delighted with the outcome." Great work!



IT'S SPECTACULAR

SINGLETON SHOWGROUND IS THE PLACE TO BE ON SATURDAY AUGUST 19 FOR THE SINGLETON CULTURAL SPECTACULAR.

This free family friendly event is an initiative of MACH Energy's Aboriginal

Community Development Fund and will showcase Aboriginal culture and

tradition at its very best.

Aunty Jean Hands is a member of the Aboriginal Community Development Fund and Chair of the Northern Region Aboriginal

Alliance and says that the Spectacular is a highly anticipated event on the community calendar.

"It's great to see MACH Energy give back to the community by supporting this event. Mines are perceived as always taking resources, people forget that companies like MACH

Energy also give a lot back to the community," Aunty Jean said. With free entry from 2pm, attendees will be able to enjoy cultural workshops, cooking demonstrations, market stalls, rides, performances and enjoy some

traditional bush tucker.

There will be live performances from Radical Son David Leha and Voice Contestant Loran Ryan. Aboriginal storyteller Len Walters will be there sharing his knowledge of Kamilaroi astronomy which holds a special place in Aboriginal navigation, storytelling and spirituality.

Jean said they were looking forward to welcoming everyone from the community. "We hope to teach people about our culture with things like basket weaving and food. I'm really looking forward to the Len Walters astronomy talks which will be a highlight of the event. And of course, you don't want to miss the fireworks as they are going to be a show stopper."



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WAMBO WINS AGAIN

FOR THE 9TH YEAR IN A ROW THE TEAM OF BRIGADESMEN FROM PEABODY'S WAMBO UNDERGROUND HAVE TAKEN HOME THE WIN IN THE HUNTER VALLEY MINES RESCUE COMPETITION.

Six teams competed on July 21 at Glencore's Bulga Underground Mine with the winner of the event progressing to the Australian Mines Rescue Competition. The Wambo boys are seasoned competitors, having already represented Australia in two International Mines Rescue competitions, which are held every two years. It is the dedication and commitment of the Wambo team that allows them to continue to win each year, and their knowledge of each other's strengths and weaknesses that comes from their familiarity as a team. Whitehaven's Narrabri team came in a close second and the near miss has only made them more determined to succeed next year. All the teams are now adamant to quash Wambo's winning streak. Brigadesmen spend many hours training and preparing for the challenges that they will face throughout the annual competition. This year's scenarios included underground search and rescue exercises involving multiple casualties. The brigadesmen were required to work as a team, in



physically and mentally challenging situations under duress, wearing full breathing apparatus. The teams also worked through a series of surface based exercises including firefighting, first aid and a theory based test of their knowledge. All these activities culminate to provide the teams with realistic emergency challenges to hone and refine their preparedness skills. The intention is to ensure these scenarios put them under pressure, simulating conditions as close to the real thing as possible. **ONE OF THE MINES RESCUE COMMUNITY'S HIGHEST ACCOLADES.** Mines Rescue Regional Manager, David Connell, said that being awarded a Mines Rescue gold medal is a significant milestone and a testament to both Craig and Matt's exceptional commitment to keeping our NSW coal industry and their fellow workers safe. **THE DAY ALSO SAW CRAIG BATES AND MATT BAILEY RECOGNISED FOR THEIR 25 YEARS OF SERVICE. THIS MARKS THEIR TREMENDOUS DEDICATION TO MINES RESCUE, AND THE OCCASION WAS REWARDED WITH THE PRESENTATION OF A GOLD MEDALLION;**



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FED UP MINERS

EVERY DAY WE ARE BOMBARDED WITH INFORMATION ON WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE EATING. IT'S NO WONDER THAT MOST OF US END UP EATING TOO MUCH. SO WHAT'S A MINER MEANT TO PUT IN THEIR GOB?

Eat more protein supplements! Grains will keep you healthy! Antioxidants will make you live longer! Dairy will give you strong bones! Don't forget your seven serves of vegetables every day! Thanks to some very clever marketing, commonplace foods are now often imbued with magical properties that will make you thinner, stronger, smarter and even stop you aging. **IT'S EASY TO FORGET THE SIMPLE FACT THAT FOOD IS FUEL.** We don't keep trying to pour petrol into a full tank yet most of us have no problem doing so when it comes to fueling ourselves. Our bodies only require a small amount of food to properly function and a problem with trying to meet all the so called 'daily requirements' is that it will lead to consuming way more calories than what you actually need. The food pyramid is a handy tool for showing what types of food you should eat, but where it fails is it almost impossible to have an enjoyable food lifestyle without going well over in certain food groups each day. For example, if you have a delicious bowl of pasta for lunch you'll likely exceed your daily carbohydrates. And when you still eat your required serves of protein and dairy then you cannot avoid eating more than you need. This leads to being chronically overnourished. Or more simply put, being a fatty. **NEW STUDIES INTO DIETARY HEALTH SPANS ARE SUGGESTING WE LOOK AT OUR FOOD INTAKE OVER OUR LIFETIME AND STOP FOCUSING ON FOOD INTAKE DAILY.** Look at what you are having over the period of a week or a month and assess whether you are meeting nutritional needs and then try finding ways to reduce your overall intake. There is no law saying you must have your meat and vegetables for dinner. You could have a bowl of vegetables one night and a steak the next. Had a milkshake? Eat your cereal dry for the next few days. Too busy to eat lunch? Well that's not a bad thing, studies into intermittent fasting are showing promising results with weight loss and metabolic improvements, including loss of fat mass, blood pressure, glycemic control and markers of cardiovascular disease risk. Stop thinking about what you should eat and start thinking about what you don't need to eat. After all summer bodies are made in the winter!

'AVE A LAUGH WITH

A burglar breaks into a house and while he's searching for valuables he hears "Jesus is watching you." He looks around but only sees a parrot in the corner. He walks up to the parrot and asks, "Are you the little guy who was talking to me?"

The parrot says "Yes, my name is Ronald."

The burglar laughs and says, "What kind of idiot gives a parrot a stupid name like that."

The parrot laughs and says, "The same idiot who named his Pitbull Jesus."

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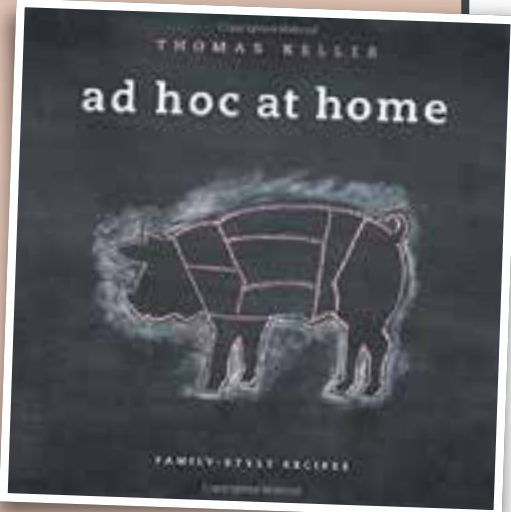


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SUMMER IS COMING

BEACH AND DAYS DOWN BY THE RIVER ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER.

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MINING SPORTING SUCCESS

LOCAL LAD, LUKE REES IS HUNTER RUGBY’S RISING STAR, A MINING SUCCESS ON AND OFF THE FIELD.

When, apprentice plant mechanic Luke Rees converted his sporting talents from league to union his success on and off the field took on ‘colt’ status. Luke has just returned from repping NSW in U19’s

Country Rugby where he vice captained the Country Cockatoo Colts squad that beat those barbarian’s north of the wall, QLD Country. “We had a training camp in Sydney and a trial match against the NSW

Waratahs Gen Blue Under 19 Side, which was great for our lead up to the game against QLD Country,” Luke tells @ The Coalface. “We won one game against the Waratahs and lost one, which was a pretty big effort. A month later we assembled again in Newcastle for the inaugural NSW Country vs QLD Country match,” continues

Luke. “It was a very close game. We ended up with a penalty right on full time, so our halfback stepped up and nailed the conversion to take us to a 23-20 win. It was great campaign with the Squad and I was proud of everyone’s efforts over the two camps.” **LUKE PLAYS FIVE-EIGHT FOR THE MAITLAND BLACKS WHO ARE ON TRACK FOR ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SEASON, BUT HE SAYS PLAYING U19S RUGBY FOR NSW WAS A PROUD MILESTONE IN HIS BRIEF RUGBY CAREER.**

“It’s a real honour to play for such a good team with so many high-quality players from the bush,” says Luke. “I was very proud of myself to get selected and to also be named as vice-captain of the squad which was a great achievement for myself.” When he’s not kicking goals on the footy field, Luke’s working just as hard on his apprenticeship with Glencore, at

the open-cut Ravensworth mine, Liddell Coal. “It’s only my first year, but my apprenticeship is going really well,” says Luke. “I’ve already learnt so much from the camaraderie of all the people within the industry. The support and knowledge that’s been shown to me inspires me and encourages me to succeed off the field as well.” So, will we ever see Luke Rees pull on a Wallabies jumper? “I’d love to play for the Wallabies, one day. That’s the dream. But, I know I still have a very long way to go.”



OK, SO WE ALL KNOW WHAT THE FIRST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB IS, BUT WHAT ABOUT FUTSAL CLUB? WELL, @ THE COALFACE SOURCES TELL US IT’S ALL PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD... THE FIRST RULE OF FUTSAL CLUB IS TO HAVE FUN.

The origin of Futsal can be traced back to Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1930 when Juan Carlos Ceriani devised a five-a-side version of soccer for youth competition. The game is played on basketball-sized courts, both indoors and out without the use of sidewalls. The term FUTSAL is the international name of the game. It’s derived from

the Spanish or Portuguese word for “soccer”, FUTbol or FUTebol, and the French or Spanish root word for “indoor” or “room”, SALon or Salle or SALa. When you say it literally, Futbol means ‘foot and ball’ (i.e. playing outdoors) and Futsal indicates ‘Futbol in room’ (i.e. playing indoors). **“FUTSAL IS A FAST PACED AND CREATIVE SPORT THAT’S HEAPS OF FUN,” SAYS NSW FUTSAL PRESIDENT GEORGE POULOS.** George says the competition in the

Hunter is heating up and that places like Singleton and Maitland are quickly becoming known for their competitor’s swift skills and tough action, on and off the ball. “You only have to watch Futsal players fight to keep the ball from crossing the touch line and you’ll immediately begin to see how the sport develops skill, control, and technique,” says George. “Players play on a small field with lines that puts players constantly under pressure from other players and out-of-play boundaries. Players must learn to settle the



ball rapidly, chop sharply, shield effectively, pass quickly and move into space.” The Futsal ball, also known as a reduced bound or low-bounce ball, is smaller than a normal outdoor soccer ball and heavier. When a Futsal ball is received, it virtually ‘sticks’ to the foot. This builds great confidence in tight spaces when rapid passes are being issued repeatedly. Repeated touches on the ball eventually produce a movement which, when transferred outdoors with a regular soccer ball, translates into a firmer and more accurate longer passes on a bigger field. Registrations for local competitions are open around the Hunter, so why not get a few mates together, form a team, and get into some Futsal flavoured fun and fitness. For more info and team registration - nswfutsal.com.au



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let me go and don’t give me the ticket.” The cop says, “That sounds fair, please exit your vehicle.”

The lawyer steps out and the cop takes out his baton and starts beating the lawyer with it.

The cop says, “Do you want me to stop or just slow down?”



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KING, OFF THE ROAD

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When it comes to mixing capability and comfort there's no other car that's as capable or comfortable as the Toyota Land Cruiser. Name one other country tough terrain handler that also has leather seats, satellite navigation, and intelligent cruise control. You can't. And neither can we. These days most 4x4's have a lot more show than go, especially when going gets rough. However, there's no room for compromise with the 200 Series Land Cruiser. Now packing more high-tech features and updated styling, Toyota make good on their promise

of up-to-date appeal with old-world toughness and reliability. Let's take a look...

There are two engines on offer in the Land Cruiser. There's a 4.7-litre V8 petrol, putting out 228kW of power and 439Nm of twist. No turbochargers here, and it's not exactly easy on the clicks. We love the sound of an old oiler. Measuring 4.5-litres in size and offering a more modest 200kW, the V8 turbo-diesel offers a whopping 650Nm of twist from as little as 1600rpm. The diesel is far more suited to a Land Cruiser; you hear and feel

very little of it within the cabin, but, it also provides the enormous SUV with some proper long haul ability.

FUEL CONSUMPTION BENEFITS TOO, WITH A CLAIMED 9.9L/100KM ON THE COMBINED CYCLE, A FIGURE THAT'S EASILY ACHIEVED ON BLACK TOP RUNS.

Toyota knows to put substance over style, yet despite this, the cabin is plush with tech and big buttons hidden in plain sight. When substance comes before style, this is the cabin you get. There's the big, chunky steering wheel, and equally enormous steering wheel buttons all made for use rather than just looking good. Spend a bit more and you'll get things like wood-grain trim, leather seats, and a big touch screen 'infotainment' system, which hosts GPS, Bluetooth and music playback service.



The new 2017, 200 Series Land Cruiser hides its tough agricultural roots very well thanks to big comfy seats that are incredibly welcoming, with the electric front seats offering endless amounts of adjustment to get things just right. Due to the cavernous proportions of the big Toyota, you can fit up to eight people inside, with the second- and third-row able to accommodate three adults abreast without a fuss. Or, you know, all your tools and toys you need to get the job done.

To test drive the new 200 Series GXL Land Cruiser, give the folks at your local Toyota a call.

WINTER BITES

AS THE DOWNHILL RUN TO SPRING GATHERS PACE, THERE'S MORE THAN A FEW REASONS TO HOOK UP THE BOAT AND HIT THE WET STUFF.

WINTER BASS

Plastic flicking for aussie bass should be high on the list of things to target as the water temp has dropped off and the bass have schooled suspended off the deeper banks.

We have managed to have a few good sessions on Lake St Clair lately, fishing plastics from small grubs to paddle tails worked slowly back through the schooled fish.

UP THE BAY

Things are continuing to fire inside the bay especially the black fish, bream and jew. The marina wall has continued to be very consistent for those chasing black fish.

The back of Middle Island has also been producing a lot of jewies with plenty of school fish to 15kg to be encountered while fishing live baits.

Bream have been active around the bay holding up around the structure for those flicking lures or floating unweighted baits.

FROM THE GRIT

All the beaches have been fishing extremely well with bream, taylor, salmon and jew.

Its defiantly beach spinning time of year with the masses of salmon turning up and plenty of big green back taylor mixed in with them.

AROUND THE STONES

The rocks have also been very productive especially those testing the string chasing pigs, grouper, bream and black fish.

Squid are a great option from the protected rocky bays as the wind starts to blow offshore over august.

OFFSHORE

The deep-water king fish run continues to fire on Allmark mountain and on Texas reef off Norah Head as we move through these winter months.

The snapper run has continued to prove a little slack on the numbers of bigger fish this winter. The early mornings and late afternoons into the night being the pick of the times to chase a knobby red.

THE POND

If you're looking for a bit of fun on the light gear or want to take the kids out and let them loose with a bit of fishing, the Swansea Channel is the place to be. Arm yourself with a small metal spinner or a 3" clear minnow style plastic, find the school and hook in.

Flathead and school jew are also still in good numbers munching soft vibes and plastics holding tight around the bait schools in the deeper areas around the lake.

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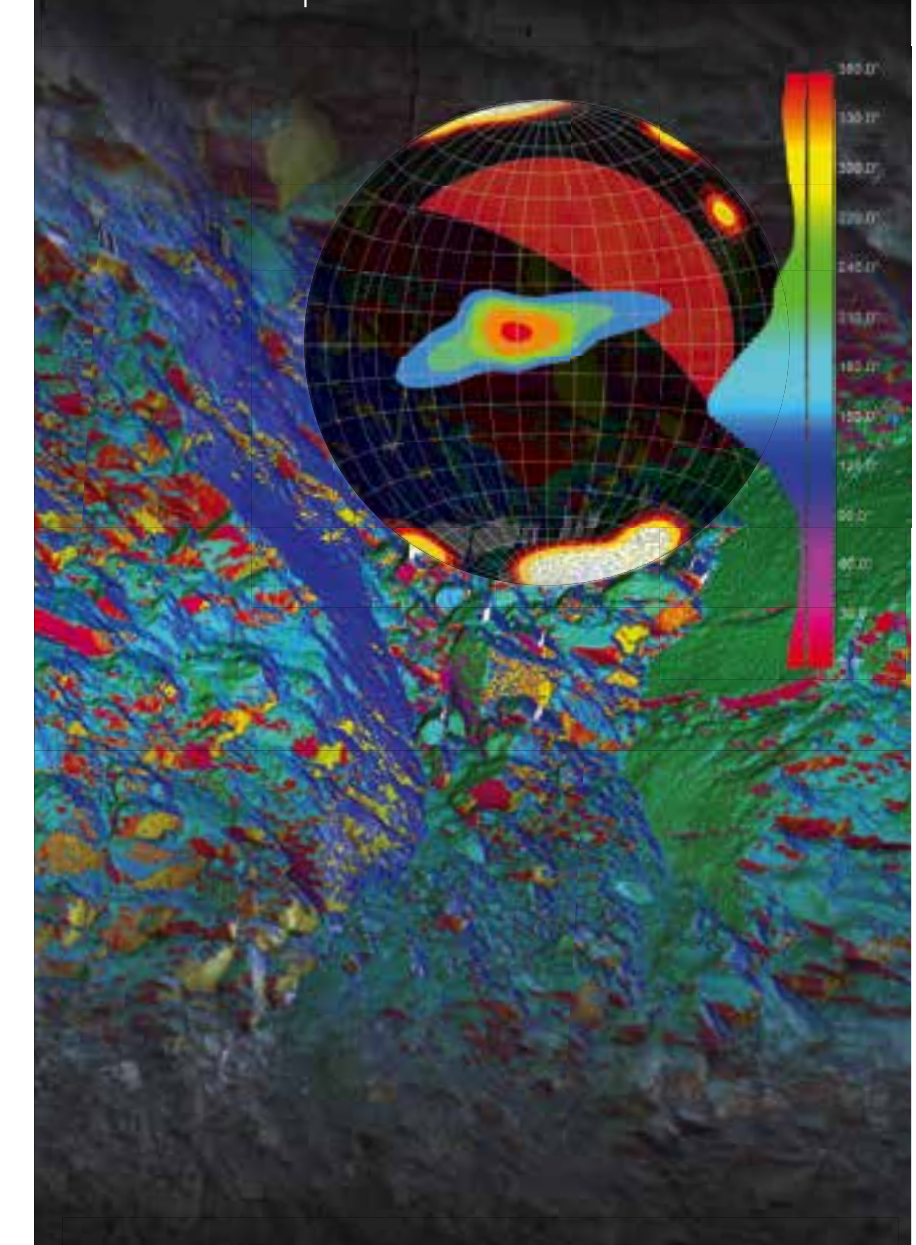


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THE AFTERLIFE

SINCE THE EARLY AGES, HUMANS HAVE QUESTIONED 'THE AFTERLIFE', THE CONCEPT THAT AN ESSENTIAL PART OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTITY CONTINUES TO EXIST AFTER DEATH.

Not so for equipment owners, a mining machine parked-up on hours or running costs, will generally be sent to a lay down yard where it is stripped of its core components that are then sent to be rebuilt and placed back into rotatable stock.

Rarely is the machine scrapped, with owners opting for core components and parts to be reintroduced into an operating fleets inventory and recycled many times over, long after

the functional and effective life of its 'host' is over.

So, it begs the question, how is it that we park-up equipment that operate and look good? Let's for a moment consider the concept of running a car. If you're like me and have ever owned an older vehicle that is getting a little long in the tooth, you will know just how quickly your 'pride and joy' can become a bottomless money pit.

Regardless of just how good that duco looks, the costs to keep it in a reliable and roadworthy condition continue to spiral until one day (at least we hope), sanity (or at least the bank) prevails and you sell it to a wrecker or some poor unsuspecting individual... With losses stemmed from the

ongoing capital expenditure, you now suddenly find yourself saving money on your running costs with the incorporation of improved technology and so on and so forth.

Not unsurprisingly, as assets age and are replaced, the manufacturers who support these machines begin to reduce their levels of low turnover stock. These reductions make preventative (and reactive) maintenance for fleet owners difficult to manage, thereby compounding the challenge of reliably operating this equipment.

Consider if you will, that a dump truck can run

upwards of 80,000 hours or more, circa 13 or 14 effective years of service before it is retired. That's a long time, especially if your machine has been superseded, if not entirely replaced with a new model.

With limited capital and performance targets to meet, pulling down your oldest machines allows the fleet to continue. With components reused and 'The Afterlife' achieved, components survive long after the original machines end.



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TEED OFF

POKOLBIN MAY BE BEST KNOWN FOR ITS WINE, BUT IT'S ALSO A HOTSPOT FOR GOLFERS, AND SO WE DUSTED OFF THE CLUBS AND REVVED UP THE GOLF CART TO BRING YOU THE BEST SPOTS FOR A HIT.

1 - Cypress Lakes Golf & Country Club

Our number one pick is the Cypress Lakes Par 72 championship course designed by Steve Smyers. It's one of the top ranked courses in Australia and the exceptional layout makes it our clear favourite. There's plenty of bunkering around the greens and the fairways are nice and wide, though grass is a bit scarce in areas. Watch out for the challenging tee shot on the 603 metre par-5 on the 16th where a precise draw up the hill is needed to get the ball in play. A tough and challenging course that will test even the most accomplished golfer. Downside – General pricing reflects its status as a resort course though a competitively priced 9 hole event has recently started on Sunday afternoons.

2 - Vintage Golf Club

Greg Norman and Bob Harrison designed this

championship course which is on the same grounds as Chateau Elan. Rated as being among the top two per cent of courses in Australia, it has an open parkland layout with gently undulating terrain and a few slopes. This is a challenging 6310m, Par 71 course which has water in play on most of the holes so pack a few extra balls. The most picturesque of all the courses with overhanging eucalypts and undisturbed wetlands. Except for all of those balls of course...

3 - Hunter Valley Golf & Country Club

Located at the Crowne Plaza Resort this is a well-regarded course by locals and visitors alike with several attractive holes and features. This Par 71 course is ideal for those newer to golf, though it still has enough good holes to challenge the better golfer. A straightforward layout, which unlike the

other courses, is relatively flat and easy to walk if you want to give the cart a miss. Favourite hole on this one is the 19th – walk straight into the newly opened Lovedale Brewery where you can sample a selections of the Hunter's best beers after working up a thirst on the course.

4 - Cessnock Golf Club

We've thrown in this course as it's great value for money compared to the three resort courses. This Jack Newton designed Par 72 course is located on the doorstep of the vineyards at Cessnock and has the least expensive green fees. You will want a buggy on this course as it's a long walk between some of the holes. The greens are good and fast and it has some interesting holes. Fairway conditions on this developing course are not yet quite on par with the others but regardless it still has a lot to offer.

@ THE COALFACE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 3 What is the stage name of Robyn Fenty (7)
- 4 The Stratocaster is a model of which guitar maker (6)
- 5 What is the first name of Composer Vivaldi (7)
- 7 Leonard Cohen song (10)
- 10 American city where Elvis was discovered dead (7)
- 11 Freddie Mercury is the lead singer (5)
- 15 ABBA is from this country (6)
- 16 Singer of the song All Shook Up (5,7)
- 17 Who was nicknamed 'The Big O' (3,7)
- 19 What was the 2016 animated movie starring Justin Timberlake (6)
- 21 Musician fatally shot by his father in 1984 (6,4)

DOWN

- 1 Taylor Swift's fans are known as this (8)
- 2 Nirvana's first album (6)
- 6 Who played Hannah Montana (7,5,5)
- 8 Female singer who died of alcohol poisoning in 2011 (3,9)
- 9 Steward Copeland was the drummer for this band (3,6)
- 12 Which city was the Copacabana nightclub in (3,4)
- 13 Highest selling album of the 1980's (8)
- 14 How many strings does a violin have (4)
- 18 New Orleans is the birthplace for this music (4)
- 20 Singer married to Trudie Styler (5)

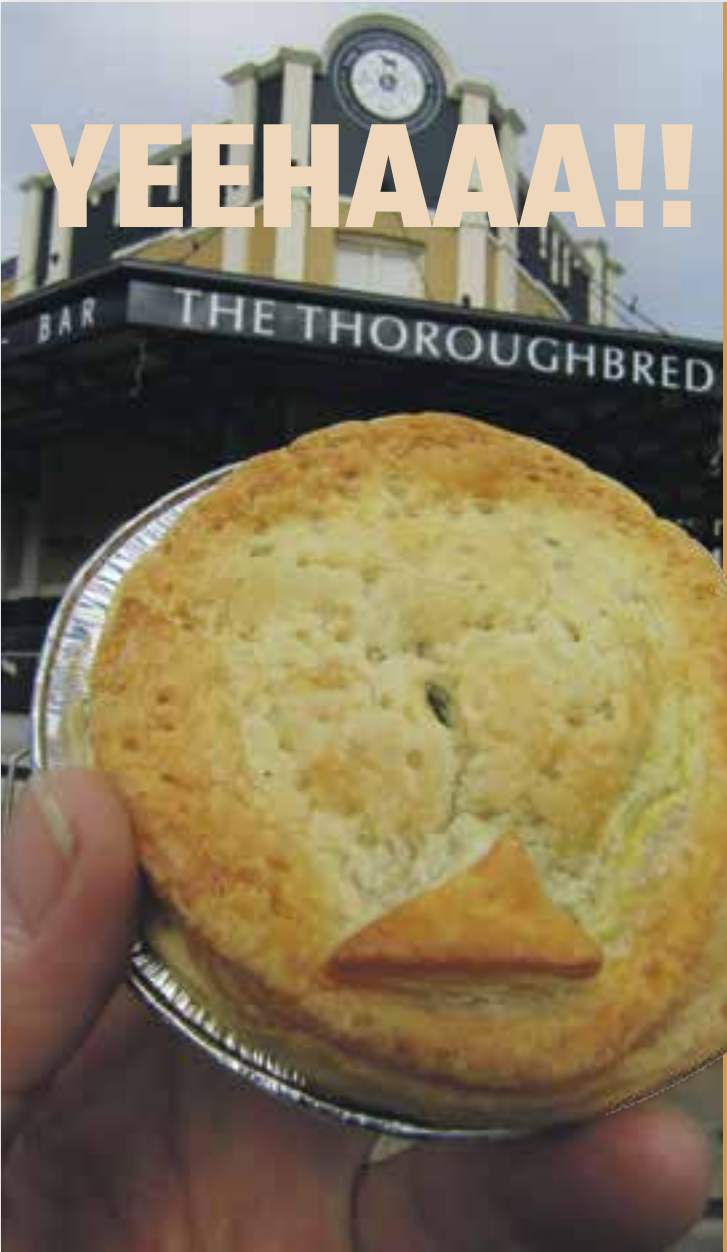


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AT LONG BLOODY LAST THE HORSE CAPITAL OF AUSTRALIA, SCONE, HAS A NEW BAKERY! BUT NOT JUST ANY BAKERY...IT'S A BAKERY IN A BLOODY PUB!!!! THE MIGHTY THOROUGHbred HOTEL HAS UNDERGONE A MAGICAL MAKEOVER!

So a Sunday a few weeks ago I had to see this genius idea for myself so I saddled up my trusty old steed Trigger, pulled out my riding chaps hand made from the skin of Phar Lap, and set off from Pieltam house stables in Singo.

On the way out of town Trigger noticed a few fillies he'd been wanting to get acquainted with for ages around Bridgeman Road so he bucked me off, jumped the fence and chased them around the paddock with his magic wand.

I KNEW BY THE LOOK IN HIS EYES HE WAS THINKING ABOUT MORE THAN PIES.

So, singing 'Don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys' I started thumbing a lift north to the promised land. Luckily for me a truck load of kindly cowgirls returning from a camp draft in Crookwell

came past. They kindly let me catch a lift in the cramped but cosy cabin conveniently carrying me on to my destination 10 minutes the other side of Crofts Pies in Aberdeen. Of course we grabbed a 'Crofty' on the way through.

Arriving in Scone the girls waved me by with a twinkle in their eye for keeping them so entertained along the way. I felt like the President of the United States during the Clinton years.

ANYWAY I STRAIGHTENED UP MY STETSON AND HEADED INSIDE. I COULDN'T SPEAK.

A bakery pub? Beer. Pies. Who woulda thought. I was lost for words so I just pointed. A shepherds pie, a curry job and of course a plain were all shoved into a bag and then straight after shoved down my gob. A short half head later followed a frosty Gold and I just sat there in stunned amazement. You learn something new every day. Hot pies, cold beers and a pub make a perfect and tasty combination. A champion effort Scone... Long live the pie pub The Thoroughbred!

The Pie Minister.

'AVE A LAUGH WITH



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An older man walks into a bar wearing a stovepipe hat, a waistcoat and a phony beard. He sits down at a bar and orders a drink. As the bartender sets it down, he asks, "Going to a party?"

"Yeah, a costume party," the man answers, "I'm supposed to come dressed as my love life."

"But you look like Abe Lincoln," protests the bartender.

"That's right. My last four scores were seven years ago."

CALLING ALL CARNIVORES

AT HONEYSUCKLE IN NEWY YOU'LL FIND A HEAP OF RESTAURANTS, BUT THERE IS ONE THAT IS THE KING OF THE JUNGLE. A LION AMONG A SAVANNAH OF GAZELLES AND ZEBRAS. A PLACE WHERE CARNIVORES GO TO SATE THEIR APPETITES. THAT PLACE IS MEET.

MEET is a Brazilian Churrasco restaurant. Here you don't just get a meal, but participate in a dining experience. From the second I arrived I was assailed by exotic aromas that had me salivating and letting my taste buds know they were in for a treat. My waistline was just going to have to pay the price.

Our server Hannah had us seated and a beer in hand in moments and she explained to us how the menu worked. For \$55 I was going to get an unlimited amount of the evening's range of meats, which would all come directly to my table where they would be carved straight to my plate. Also included was a platter of traditional Brazilian side dishes which could be topped up throughout the night at my request. Which of course I requested quite often.

MEET THE MEAT - SUCCULENT STRIPS OF THE BEST CUTS THAT WILL BRING OUT YOUR INNER

BEAST. YOU NAME IT, THEY CARVE IT.

Beef, chicken, pork, lamb, all slowly cooked and spit roasted over their custom-made barbecue and Texas style smoker. I sampled sausages and spicy chicken wings, melt in your mouth beef ribs and juicy pork loin. Flavour after flavour, some sweet, some spicy, some savoury, and some a little bit of each. On and on it went, until the meat sweats kicked in and the arteries started to squeeze and I finally had to admit that I was beefed.

But it didn't end there as who could say no to delicious cinnamon fried banana balls and sweetened pineapple slices straight off a skewer. Everything I tried was cooked perfectly and believe me I tried everything.

Food aside, the service was great and I was made to feel welcome from the second I showed up until I was finally able to lift my overfed

but gloriously gorged body from the table. Yes I'd just eaten more calories than I normally would in a week, but like the lion who has

just fed on the gazelle, I was sure it would be weeks before I needed to feed again.

I am so glad I met you MEET.



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@ THE COALFACE TRIVIA

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When did the Newcastle BHP Steel Works close?
When was coal officially discovered in Newcastle?
Name of the old power station at Nobbys from 1915 – 1953?
Answers next month.

LAST MONTHS ANSWERS

1. Which street in Denman was named after the first European settler? **Ogilvie**
2. In what year was the great Denman fire? **1928**
3. The Royal Hotel featured in what movie in the early 1950's? **The Shiralee**

@ THE COALFACE PRIZE WINNERS

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CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR WINNERS!

THE MYSTIC MINER’S AUGUST 2017 HOROSCOPES

 Virgo Aug 23 - Sept 22	The recent freakishly warm winter weather has confirmed your suspicions around climate change Virgo – invest in a decent dinghy for when the floods come.	 Pisces Feb 19 - Mar 20	Sometimes Pisces, you reminisce about the fun you had as a kid. In reality, the things your parents let you get away with would have you in state care nowadays, so be careful who you tell.
 Libra Sept 23 - Oct 22	Put every five dollar note you receive this month into a jar Libra, and use the proceeds to take your partner for a romantic evening – they deserve it for putting up with your recent crankiness.	 Aries Mar 21 - Apr 19	Before getting your new tattoo Aries, check out a YouTube clip of laser removal and decide whether you and your wallet have the pain threshold to get rid when you hate it in 5 years' time.
 Scorpio Oct 23 - Nov 21	Want to free up some time Scorpio? Give yourself a break from social media this month. It used to be cool but Donald Trump and the weird kids from school have pretty much wrecked it anyway.	 Taurus Apr 20 - May 20	Do not answer your phone when at the petrol station Taurus. Fire hazard will be the least of your worries if you put a tank full of diesel into a petrol engine because you’re busy chit chatting away.
 Sagittarius Nov 22 - Dec 21	You will be horrified by your tax bill this month Sagittarius. Just keep ignoring the reminders until you finally become wealthy enough not to have to pay tax at all.	 Gemini May 21 - Jun 20	Love is in the air for Geminis this month. Some romance is just what you need to keep the winter blues at bay, so don’t stuff it up by revealing your true self too early.
 Capricorn Dec 22 - Jan 19	Capricorns please note - anyone (including you) who uses the phrase “I don’t mean to be rude, but...” is usually a massive tool and should be avoided at all costs.	 Cancer Jun 21 - Jul 22	It’s flu season Cancer, so if you want to avoid the dreaded germs you’d better start looking after yourself – a can of Fanta and a Terry’s chocolate orange don’t count as vitamin C.
 Aquarius Jan 20 - Feb 18	Aquarians will enjoy a brush with fame this month. However, if you see someone you know on A Current Affair, change the channel immediately and do not mention it to anyone.	 Leo Jul 23 - Aug 22	Send some flowers to your mum on your birthday Leo – she was the one who did the hard yards to get the little bundle of joy you were all those years ago, so say thanks!

THE JEWEL OF MEXICO

PUERTO VALLARTA ON THE MEXICAN PACIFIC COAST IS ONLY A SHORT HOP SOUTH FROM LOS ANGELES, BUT TAKES YOU DEEP INTO THE WARM, WELCOMING HEART OF COASTAL MEXICO.

PUERTO VALLARTA'S OLD TOWN AREA

UMMM... WHERE? NESTLED DEEP IN BANDERAS BAY ON MEXICO'S WEST COAST, PUERTO VALLARTA ISN'T AS WELL KNOWN AS THE MORE GLITZY DESTINATIONS LIKE CANCUN OR CABO, YET OFFERS VISITORS A FAR RICHER EXPERIENCE ALONGSIDE THE USUAL GLAMOROUS MEGA RESORTS.

The area has been inhabited for eons due to the natural coastal beauty and stable warm climate and as such it is steeped in true Mexican culture and history making it a premier tourist destination of South America with two areas worth checking out.

Old Town is the original town central area, and has a rich, original Mexican town feel to it. Buildings from all eras, some beautifully restored and others cheerfully splashed in bright beach colours, line skinny crazy-cobbled streets where traffic, with what seems like very little need for road rules, just gets along in that Mexican-kind-

of-way with the ambling tourists and locals on foot.

After a long sunset over the water, the restaurants, bars and clubs of Old Town come alive, offering up a wide variety of night life - join the happy noisy crowds in a beachside cervecería for cheap drinks, or hit a high end cocktail bar and bomb your hard-earned on exotic tequila-based tippie.

Neuvo Vallarta is located a few minutes taxi ride north of Old Town, and is home to the mega-resorts. There's not so much of a town centre, and it's more a case of resort-hopping if you are up this way. While these resorts are amazing and you probably don't even have to leave the grounds to have a great time (which I'm sure a lot of visitors don't), you really do miss out on the real Mexican experience. But if you're after that go-nowhere-do-nothing option, there's plenty of these resorts to choose from.

PLENTY TO DO, BUT IT'S GREAT DOIN NUTHIN'

With clear, warm water year round to dive into and most beaches offering Corona ad-like vistas of beautiful blue water, glowing sand and palm trees you'll want to have a crack at all the water-related activities. The thick, dense rainforest and steep mountainous terrain surrounding the area feature outstanding hiking, along with zip-lining and all-terrain buggy tours. If your a golfer, the coast to the north of Puerto Vallarta is home to some of Mexico's most exclusive seaside golf resorts and courses.

For foodies, the local cuisine options are vast. Sit in the clam bar on the Malécon (main beach-front strip) for hours slurping down monster fresh clams, oysters and beers on the cheap. Choose from a huge list of world-class fine dining options with views over the bay to die for. Grab the best charcoal-fired chicken you have ever

had from the hole-in-a-wall outlets in the back streets (and drown it in their amazing hot-sauce).

Mexico has a warm, friendly culture that gets along just fine with the laid back Aussie way. In Puerto Vallarta we Aussies are a bit of a novelty, and I hit it off with every local I had a yarn to. My Spanish isn't great, sometimes their english was non-existent, but we would still end up having a laugh. As with visiting any country, being friendly and respectful to the locals and staff pays off in spades with big smiles and great service.

With the stunning natural beauty, amazing culture and cruisy locals, Puerto Vallarta offers travellers a laid-back, authentic Mexican beachside experience - a place where the days drift by while not much changes, because everyone is just so damn happy looking out over that beautiful bay, then grabbing another cold cerveza as the sun sets.



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