



Wambo Wedgetail's win mines rescue competition

Hunter Valley (Australia), 1 July 2019 —

Peabody's Wambo Wedgetails have taken out the 2019 Hunter Valley underground mines rescue competition under the exceptional captaincy debut of Kurt Bereza who also took out the coveted Wayne Wallace Shield for Best Captain. The team, which included two newcomers to mines rescue, demonstrated great competency and depth of skills with Kurt leading the team following the departure of mines rescue stalwart Warren Kirk who relocated to the southern coal mining region last year. Yancoal's Ashton team were named runners up.

On accepting the winning shield Kurt said 'I would like to start by thanking our team. This win is attributed to everyone's efforts, team work, skills, competency and commitment to the tasks that were thrown at us. It is also is a celebration of the investment that Peabody and Wambo management have put into our training, skill development and mentoring along the way.'

'I would also like to sincerely thank Albert Scheepers our General Manager and Dave Gibson our Mine Manager for the continual support, as well as allowing two Wambo teams to compete,' he said. 'The team at Hunter Valley Mines Rescue is also to be commended on their efforts for once again pulling together an exceptional event that each year continues to test our skills and competency.'

Kurt reflected on his first experience as captain and explained, 'It was great. It provided a very different perspective for me. You need to trust in your team but you also see the importance of our preparation with a new perspective; honing your skills and capabilities through application and training, and the importance of having rigorous procedures.'

Kurt started in the industry as a cadet with Hunter Valley Mines Rescue and built on his brigadesman skills from there. He is proud of this base and has since developed a career in the area of health and safety with Wambo.

'I love being part of mines rescue and I am thrilled to now have a win as captain under my belt. There are many role models in our mines rescue community to help all brigadesmen coming through the ranks. Building these capabilities provides some peace of mind for all of industry, and personally for me, it gives me a strong sense of purpose that I am able to make a difference by being part of mines rescue,' he added.

Other awards presented following the days' competition included the highly-contested First Aid Award that was won by Whitehaven's Narrabri team. Dave Malone, captain of Wambo's

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second team, the Wambo Wombats, was given the honour of receiving the Best Theory Award for a second year in a row.

Mines Rescue Regional Manager, David Connell, said the Hunter Valley Mines Rescue competition was an ideal opportunity for brigadesmen to come together and demonstrate their safety expertise. Now in its 36th year, the annual event tests the incident response and rescue skills of active mines rescue brigadesmen.

‘It is critical that we acknowledge the dedication and commitment of our competing brigadesmen and my team in designing such a challenging competition format. We must also acknowledge that days like today would not be possible without the assistance of mining companies like Glencore who have kindly given permission for Ravensworth Underground Mine, which is on care and maintenance, to host the event. I would like to sincerely thank Mark Munro, Ravensworth Underground’s Mining Engineer Manager and his team for their commitment and support in making this year’s event so successful,’ Mr Connell said.

Mr Connell explained that Mines Rescue and volunteer brigadesmen continue to provide vital service with prevention a major focus of their role.

‘Our industry continues to recognise the importance of emergency response safety management systems and high-risk activity workplace education and training. This competition allows us to simulate the conditions and pressure of real-life emergencies and put the unique skills of our brigadesmen to the test. As Mines Rescue is committed to continuous improvement, it also gives us an opportunity to identify any training areas that may require additional focus to ensure we maintain the highest possible standard of competency,’ he concluded.

- ENDS

Facts about mine rescue brigadesmen

- There are 461 voluntary brigadesmen across the NSW coal industry
- Teams competing from Narrabri, Wambo Underground (2), Ashton, Integra and a composite team.
- Minimum 5% industry dedicated to emergency response (1 in 20 underground workers)
- Initial 10-day induction training required for all new recruits
- Six training days required per year for all brigadesmen
- A large percentage of brigadesmen progress into more senior mining roles

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About Coal Services:

Coal Services is an industry-owned organisation committed to providing critical services and expertise to the NSW coal mining industry.

We operate a Specialised Health and Safety Scheme that provides an integrated suite of services aimed at preventing injury and illness in the workplace. These services help employers to identify, assess, monitor and control many risks inherent in the NSW coal mining industry.

Our preventative and responsive services in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation, mines rescue and training help to deliver on our purpose 'to protect'.

We are jointly owned by two shareholders, the NSW Minerals Council and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU). Our purpose, vision and values are aligned to focus on the safety and health of our industry and its workers.

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