

Southern Mines Rescue recognises exceptional service

Wollongong (Australia), 17 August 2022 –

Mines Rescue brigade members from across the Illawarra gathered on Friday, 12 August to celebrate the return of the Southern Mines Rescue competition and to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of those who volunteer to the service.

It was the first time the district event has been held since 2019 due to COVID restrictions. Peabody's Metropolitan team were named overall winners – the first time that a team from the 137-year-old mine has taken the title in the history of the competition. The team will represent the Southern district at the Australian competition to be held in Wollongong later this year.

Six teams from five local mines worked through a series of scenarios designed to test their emergency preparedness capabilities, teamwork and communication skills while they work under pressure. The tasks simulate incidents and situations that rescue brigades could face should they be called to action for example, underground search and rescue, monitoring mine conditions, managing confined space hazards, fire-fighting and first aid. There is also a theory exam.

Wayne Green, General Manager NSW Mines Rescue, said that the people who volunteer their time to Mines Rescue have a special bond and a commitment to the service that transcends the workplace.

“The primary purpose of Mines Rescue is to provide emergency response to the NSW coal mining industry in the case of an emergency. Fortunately, major incidents requiring brigade response are limited but events like these allow brigade members to practice and hone a range of skills that can be used at work as well as in the community.”

Mines Rescue brigade members were recognised for their years of service, with more than 260 years' service between them.

Among them was veteran brigade member, Greg Saunders, who retired last year after an incredible 43 years of active mines rescue service. Known locally as 'the Colonel', he is the longest-serving brigade member in NSW, he began training in 1978 at the age of 21 which was then the minimum age for rescue corpsmen.

‘The people who join rescue have a focus on helping people. Greg’s passion for helping people began when we volunteered at the Bulli Surf Club; he then joined Mines Rescue. Over the years

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he has been involved in two active deployments and has used his rescue and first aid skills countless times to not only assist at mine site incidents, but also in the community as sporting events or attending to road accidents,' Mr Green explained.

Greg has participated in around 35 local mines rescue competitions over the years and competed six times at a national level. At his last Australian competition in 2017 he was likely the oldest competitor at 60 years of age; which is testament to his dedication as many younger people fail the medical requirement for physical fitness. Prior to his retirement from the service, Greg remained involved in local competitions as an assessor.

Also recognised at the evening was Bill Morris, who has retired from his position of Training Officer at Southern Mines Rescue after 22 years. He was also part of Mines Rescue for 40 years. During his service he has responded to many incidents, including a serious fire on the longwall face at Westcliff Colliery. He was among the first to arrive at the mine; with numerous rescue brigades taking several hours to control the fire and secure the longwall.

'Bill is a strong believer in safety and making people, particularly new starters to the industry, understand the inherent dangers in underground mining and the need to pay attention to safety standards and procedures,' said Mr Green.

Bill has taught the Generic Underground Induction course – an industry safety induction course that is a requirement to work at many of the underground mines across NSW – since 2002. It is estimated that he has taught around 8,300 people in that time.

'Anyone who has been through our station for a training day has most likely had the privilege of having Bill as a trainer. He has shared his invaluable experience with many in this room and across our district to ensure we continue to set a safety standard as they enter the industry. His reputation is such that we have been able to take numerous participants underground at the Westcliff Colliery as part of their induction course for many years.'

Wayne Cook, Andrew Bull and Steven Rutledge were also recognised for 25 years of service; while badges for 15 and 5 years of service were also presented.

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Mines competing at the 2022 Southern Mines Rescue competition

- Appin (Illawarra Coal South32)
- Dendrobium (Illawarra Coal South32)
- Metropolitan (Peabody)
- Russell Vale (Wollongong Coal)
- Tahmoor (Glencore) – two teams, Tahmoor Red and Tahmoor Black

Facts about mine rescue brigade members

- Minimum 5% industry dedicated to emergency response
- Initial 10-day induction training required for all new recruits, then six training days per year for all brigade members
- Brigade enrolment is voluntary
- A large percentage of brigade members progress into more senior mining roles
- Around 130 brigade members in the Southern district



Back L-R: Warren Kirk (captain), Joshua Woods (vice captain), Kain Mason, Mitchell Roberts
Front L-R: Dean Roberts, Adam Hampson, Christopher Samanc



Greg Saunders with Peter Robbins of Mines Rescue.

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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 Mining and Energy Union. Our purpose, vision and values are aligned to focus on the safety and health of our industry and its workers.

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