

Springvale secures third straight win; Wilpingjong claims open cut title

Lithgow (Australia), 1 September 2025 –

Springvale's underground team and Wilpinjong's open cut team emerged victorious at the Western Mines Rescue competition, held on Friday 29 August 2025.

Nine teams from mine sites across the Lithgow, Mudgee, and Gunnedah mining regions competed at the annual event, which included underground rescue exercises and surface emergency response for open cut operations.

The teams navigated a range of scenarios to assess their emergency preparedness, teamwork, and communication skills under high-pressure conditions. These exercises were crafted to mirror real-life incidents they might encounter in actual emergencies.

For underground teams, exercises involved handling a mass casualty first aid situation, team-building exercises, search and rescue operations, monitoring mine conditions, and managing hazards. Open cut teams' scenarios focused on responding to road crash rescues, vertical rope, heavy lift, and confined space rescues.

Centennial Coal's Springvale team won the underground competition and will represent the district at the Australian Mines Rescue underground competition, which will be held in Queensland in October.

Springvale team captain, Luke Smith, praised his team's performance, which secured their win for the third consecutive year, and his third Best Captain, underground, win.

"Our team really felt prepared going into the comp this year; I've got a lot of confidence in the team. We really came together on the day and just bounced off each other. Everyone's got their strengths, and we always pick each other up. That camaraderie we have really shows when it counts.

"The underground mass casualty scene really tested us and was super realistic. It was something you would see if a tragedy were to occur underground, and it felt real to us.

"There's nothing better than going to a comp and learning new things, especially things you hope you never actually need to use in real life", said Luke.

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Peabody’s Wilpinjong Coal team were named the best open cut team on the day. Briony Pendlebury, who captained the Wilpinjong open cut emergency response team, and also took home Best Captain, open cut, spoke on her team’s win.

“We’re exceptionally proud of ourselves as a team. This win has been a massive boost of confidence for everyone, especially as we don’t normally work together.

“Yet, right from the first scenario, we were all on the same page. On the day we felt comfortable, if not entirely confident,” she said.

“The road crash was the challenge of the comp for us, but the learnings we’ve taken will strengthen us for future competitions. Most of our preparation comes from our regular ERT training and sessions with Mines Rescue. It’s training you hope to never need in real life, but it gives us a strong foundation of knowledge to carry with us”, explained Briony.

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 and ERT response are limited, but events like these allow those competing to practice and hone a range of skills that can be used at work as well as in the community,” explained Dave McLean, Mines Rescue’s Deputy State Operations Manager.

Mr McLean also thanked Centennial for partnering with Western Mines Rescue for the competition at their Angus Place mine.

“Bringing these competitions to life takes a huge amount of preparation and coordination. I’m grateful to everyone in our Western team and across the industry who helped make the day such a success. Having access to the Angus Place facilities really allowed us to elevate the realism of the event”, he said.

- ENDS

Mines competing at the 2025 Western Mines Rescue competition

Underground teams	Open Cut teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Airly• Narrabri• Clarence• Springvale (winner - underground)• Ulan West• Ulan underground	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wilpinjong (winner – open cut)• Moolarben Open Cut• Boggabri



Springvale

Back L-R: Nick Mostyn, Ben Smith, Andrew Bellintonio, Mic Charlton
Front L-R: Aaron Kelso, Luke Smith, Gavin Monaghan.



Wilpinjong Open Cut

L-R: Ashley Bassett, Mitchell Brain, Briony Pendlebury, Travis Magro, Annette Everingham, Paul Mullette (absent).

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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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