



Ashton claim victory at Hunter competition

Muswellbrook (Australia), 19 June 2026 —

Mines Rescue Brigades from across the Hunter and Gunnedah regions competed at the Hunter Valley Mines Rescue competition on Friday, 19 June 2026.

Held at Muswellbrook's Malabar mine, the event saw seven teams apply their specialist training in search and rescue, first aid, and firefighting across underground and surface settings.

In a tight competition, the Ashton team, captained by Michael Millgate, was named the overall winners at a presentation dinner following the event.

This was a celebrated win, 20 years in the making, as captain Michael Millgate said:

"After 20 years, bringing the title back to Ashton is incredibly special; it's a testament to the dedication of our team and everyone who has worked behind the scenes to get us here".

Reflecting on the strength of the competition, Michael said preparation and trust within the team were key.

"At the start of the comp, there were a few nerves given the strength of the field, but everyone in the team knew their role and trusted our preparation."

As with all Mines Rescue competitions, there are always some unexpected challenges -

"The first aid scenario really tested us; seven casualties under high pressure meant rapid triage, firm delegation and well-executed patient handovers. The team really kept a sense of urgency, and everyone knew exactly what to do," said Michael.

Michael also praised his vice-captain, Matt Butler:

"My vice-captain, Matt, was instrumental; calm, experienced and hands-on with the team communications. He kept us focused and running like clockwork."

The primary purpose of Mines Rescues is to provide emergency response to the NSW coal mining industry in the case of an emergency. Thankfully, major incidents requiring brigade response are limited.

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Events like these allow brigade members to practice and hone their skills in preparation for the unfortunate circumstances where they may be called upon.

Matthew Enright, Regional Manager, Hunter Valley and Gunnedah Mines Rescue, said that these competitions are important days on the Mines Rescue calendar.

“Our Mines Rescue competitions are designed to challenge teams in scenarios that closely reflect real emergency situations. They test not only technical skills but also teamwork, communication, and calm decision-making that are critical in a response.

These competitions are not just about who wins on the day; they're of benefit for our entire mining community”.

Fast Facts:

- There are 461 voluntary brigade members across the NSW coal industry; around 150 in the Northern region
- Minimum 5 per cent of industry dedicated to emergency response (1 in 20 underground workers)
- Initial ten-day induction training required for all new recruits
- Six training days are required per year for all brigade members
- A large percentage of brigade members progress into more senior mining roles

- ENDS -



Ashton team members: (L-R) – Wade Denham, Tim Lantry, Michael Millgate ©, Matt Butler (vc), Dave Riddock, Stephen MacIntosh



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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 are 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 (MEU). Our purpose, vision and values are aligned to focus on the safety and health of our industry and its workers.

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