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April 2023



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‘We have taken a lot of pride in producing electricity for NSW’

Liddell Power Station was switched off on 28 April 2023 after more than fifty years of service generating electricity for NSW. Our Union has been proud to represent workers at Liddell for all those years and we pay tribute to our current and retired members who have spent all or part of their working lives at Liddell.

Peter Barry, who has worked at Liddell for over 40 years and been a union delegate for 20 years, said it would be an emotional day for workers when the power station was finally turned off.

“The operational staff have a lot of passion about this place, they have kept the place running and kept the units online. We have taken a lot of pride in producing electricity for NSW households and businesses.”

Peter said that a positive and collaborative culture had been built at Liddell, with different departments working together to solve problems.

“I feel very lucky that I worked at Liddell all these years.”

Peter will work on the decommission crew until June or July and then transfer to nearby Bayswater, also operated by AGL, until he retires. Most of the remaining Liddell workers, aside from those ready to retire, will transfer to Bayswater.

Our Union secured a commitment from AGL to

no forced redundancies at Liddell, which could be achieved because of the adjacent Bayswater power station.

However, Northern Mining and NSW Energy President Robin Williams said workers affected by future closures would not be in the same position.

“In just two years’ time, Eraring Power Station on the shores of Lake Macquarie is also due to close – however there is not a nearby power station for those workers to transfer to.

“Our members in the energy industry are deeply concerned about their prospects for secure, well-paid jobs into the future and the decline of their communities.

“That’s why we are backing the call for a federal Energy Transition Authority to fund and co-ordinate support for workers, families and communities affected by the closure of coal power stations and associated coal mines.”

The people of NSW owe a debt of gratitude to the Liddell workforce, for powering the state for so long, said Robin.

“On behalf of the Mining and Energy Union, I’d like to thank all our current and former members at Liddell, for their commitment and contribution to our union over the decades.



“In particular, I’d like to thank all those who have stepped up as delegates during these years,

Meet the underground miner who is a kickboxing world champ

Matt Stapleford is a Hunter Valley local, electrician at North Wambo Underground Mine, MEU member, and kickboxing world champion.

Last month, Matt defended his title as the WKF PRO World Champion title in K-1 rules kickboxing in Austria, against a local kickboxer from Vienna, making him the reigning professional world champion.

In the Austrian tournament, Matt won on points, meaning that the decision went to the judges after five rounds.

We spoke to him about his kickboxing career and his journey to becoming a world champion.

“I was involved in some amateur boxing fights as a kid, and I transitioned into kickboxing after an interesting one-off fight,” said Matt.

Around ten years ago, Matt had the opportunity to fight the current world champion at the time as an amateur.

“It was my first kick boxing fight, and the guy had been in over 100 fights, so it was a mismatch, and I obviously wasn’t supposed to win but I did.”

Matt said that the victory was a surprise to everyone, although he didn’t get away completely unharmed.

“I busted up my leg pretty badly, and I was injured for three months, but that was the start of my kickboxing career,”

including our current team of Peter Barry, Lionel Gleeson and Bob Cornish.

“They have done a fantastic job representing members and ensuring that members have had a strong and comprehensive agreement protecting their interests throughout the transition period.

“Liddell is an iconic sight in the Hunter Valley and its closure is a sad day for the workforce and community. It’s an opportunity to reflect on Liddell’s contribution and the need to look after our energy workforce at a time of enormous change.”



Matt says that kickboxing is a very physical and mental game, and his training style is to train like he fights. To train for kickboxing fights, Matt does high intensity training sessions, bag work, sparring bag punching and bag kicking.

In the lead up to a fight, Matt goes on a strict diet, and two days before a fight he refrains from eating and drinking to prepare for the weigh in, which is no small feat.

When asked if there were any similarities between kickboxing and mining, Matt said that underground work is complimentary to his training as it is physical work and requires a great deal of discipline.

“Actually, crib is very helpful because when I’m underground it means I can only eat what’s in my crib tin, so that means that I’m eating right because that’s all I have,” Matt laughed.

Matt has shown determination, grit and discipline and we congratulate him on defending the world title. We keenly await his next championship.

VOTE

Yes



Mining &
Energy
Union



FOR A STRONG, INDEPENDENT MINING AND ENERGY UNION

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q Why are we voting?

A The Mining and Energy Union applied to the Fair Work Commission for a ballot of members to withdraw from the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU) and become an independently registered organisation.

In April 2023, the Fair Work Commission approved our application.

Our National Convention in 2021 unanimously endorsed applying for a withdrawal ballot. While we have faced numerous legal delays and challenges, we have persisted in pursuing a ballot in line with the strong wishes of members expressed through our democratic structures including National Convention, Central Council and District Boards of Management.

Q Who can vote?

A All financial members of the Mining and Energy Division as at 3 April 2023 are eligible to vote in the ballot. All eligible members are encouraged to have their say. Members of other Divisions of the CFMMEU do not get a vote.

Q When can we vote?

A The ballot is open from 17 May to 19 June 2023. For members voting by postal ballot, your ballot paper must be mailed to arrive no later than 5pm on Monday 19 June. We advise posting it no later than 12 June, to ensure it arrives in time.

Q Would leaving the CFMMEU affect our membership, elections or Lodge activities?

A No. Under the withdrawal process, if Mining and Energy Division Members support leaving the CFMMEU then all of our Division's members automatically transfer to the new Union. It is not necessary to conduct new elections for District or Lodge officials. All existing Enterprise Agreements would remain in place and current union activities and structures continue.

While there will be little change for members on the ground, independence gives us more control over our future and ensures all our resources are directed to Mining and Energy members.

Q What would a new union be called?

A The new union will be called the Mining and Energy Union and we will retain our existing logo and branding.

In 2022, following a strong vote from Lodges, we changed our Divisional rules so that we could be known as the Mining and Energy Union, even though we are legally still a Division of the CFMMEU.

Q What are the next steps?

A If a majority of members support leaving the CFMMEU in the ballot, the Mining and Energy Union will apply to the Federal Court seeking orders to transfer assets to the newly registered union and fix a withdrawal date before the end of 2023.

Q What will happen to the CFMMEU if our Division withdraws?

A We have agreed on withdrawal terms with the CFMMEU, including rules of each organisation. The remaining Divisions will continue to be amalgamated as the Construction Forestry Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU). We will work constructively with the CFMEU as we do with other unions across the movement where our members have shared interests.

Q Where can I find out more?

A Information including the 'scheme of withdrawal', rules of the new MEU and CFMEU and further background material can be found at meudocs.com. If you have any questions about the ballot process please contact Designated Officer Shane Thompson at do@meu.org.au.

Record prices easing, but forecasts for coal remain strong

Recent skyrocketing commodities prices have started making their way back down to Earth, but big mining company profits are in no danger of disappearing any time soon. According to the latest forecasts from the federal government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources, thermal and metallurgical coal prices are set to remain above historical averages over the medium-term future.

The forecasts expect average sale prices of 6,000 kcal Newcastle thermal coal not to drop below US\$150/t until 2025. And prices are predicted to remain above their 2015-2020 average for the entire forecast period (see graph).

Meanwhile, prices for Australian hard coking coal are projected to remain above US\$200/t on average until 2025, and above US\$150/t for the entire forecast period which runs to 2028.

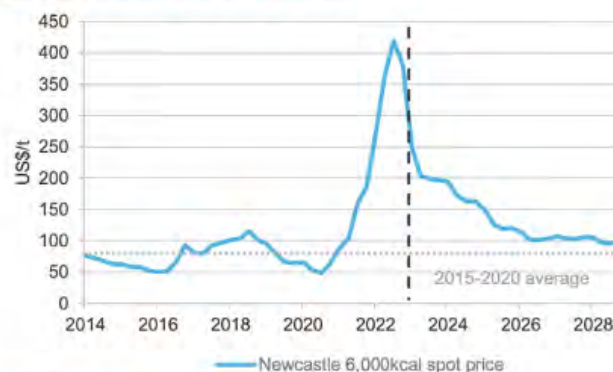
As more and more countries look to make progress on their emissions goals, so-called 'critical minerals' such as lithium and base metals, are set to take on a bigger role within Australia's enviable export portfolio. But, throughout the energy transition, many countries will also be looking towards Australian coal as a higher grade option for their thermal power generation or to feed their steelworks.

Australian coal exports are high quality and in-demand. This means that Australian product (especially our metallurgical coal) is well-placed to attract buyer interest even as global demand for coal commences its decline, as is widely expected

to occur this decade. In fact, the government thinks our met coal exports will actually increase, from 164 million tonnes this financial year, to 178 million tonnes in the 2026-27 financial year. But moderating prices would see export earnings drop from AU\$63 billion to around AU\$36 billion, a result more in line with earnings in the years prior to 2021.

The future for thermal coal is more challenging. Nonetheless, Australian exports retain a robust outlook over the next 5 years, with diminishing global demand likely to affect lower grade coal first. Export volumes are expected to remain steady at around 195mt over the 5-year forecast period, with mine closures and openings in balance. However, falling prices will return export earnings to more typical levels – export earnings for thermal coal are forecast at \$19bn in real terms for 2027-28, similar to what they were prior to the global upheaval stoked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Figure 6.7: Thermal coal price forecast



Source: IHS (2023)



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Same Job Same Pay: get ready for the scare campaign

Message from the General President



In April, the Federal Government's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations released a plain-looking document that heralds big changes in the mining industry.

The Same Job Same Pay Consultation Paper marks an important step towards the Labor Government legislating an election promise to address the misuse of labour hire to cut wages.

The consultation paper acknowledges that while labour hire plays a legitimate role in the workforce, "some employers use these arrangements to deliberately undercut bargained pay and conditions." They certainly do.

Workers across the coal mining industry will be very familiar with this scenario. Over the past ten to 15 years, we've seen a substantial shift away from permanent jobs employed by the mine operator to insecure jobs employed by labour hire companies, who are contracted to the mine operator.

Because of the gains unionised coal miners have made through collective bargaining over many years, Enterprise Agreements for permanent employees of mine operators tend to be comprehensive, with wages and conditions substantially better than the Black Coal Mining Industry Award.

By outsourcing some or all employees to labour hire companies, mine operators push wages back down to the legal minimum set out in the Award. Any bargaining to improve conditions then takes place off this lower bar – and if labour hire workers get too organised the mine operator can simply ditch the contract and start over with someone else, pushing wages and conditions back to the minimum.

As the Government's consultation paper notes, this practice erodes job security and undermines a key element of the Fair Work Act, which is to establish enforceable wages and conditions through enterprise bargaining.

On the consultation paper's release, employer groups were quick off the mark to declare that Same Job Same Pay is unfair and unworkable. Employers say that labour hire workers deserve choice and

flexibility – presumably they mean the choice and flexibility to be paid less than the permanents working next to them. They say that without access to labour hire workforces, mines will be forced to shut down.

What rubbish.

Same Job Same Pay is not about preventing mines from using labour hire. It is about ensuring that labour hire is used for its intended purpose of managing short-term needs, sourcing specialist skills or managing peaks and troughs in production.

It is about ensuring that if labour hire workers are employed to perform the same work as permanent employees, they are not paid less for that work.

The Federal Government has flagged that it will introduce Same Job Same Pay legislation to parliament in this year's Spring sitting. That means we'll have a long winter of debate about closing the loopholes that allow mining companies to pay some workers less, just because they're labour hire.

Just remember that the big mining companies claiming that Same Job Same Pay will wreck the industry are renowned for running scare campaigns about anything that affects their bottom line. Whether it's royalties or taxes or wages – mining companies never like sharing. They only do it when they're made to by law.

Also remember that over the past two years, mining companies have made profits they could have only dreamed of before the global economic disruption caused by Covid and the Ukraine war. They can afford to pay the wages and conditions set fairly and squarely through enterprise bargaining with their permanent workforce to everyone performing the same work.

Our union has advocated for Same Job Same Pay for many years and we won't stop until it becomes law. With formal consultation now underway we can expect plenty of fear-mongering and nay-saying, but we can also take heart that this important reform is a big step closer.

Tony Maher, General President.