

JULY 2022

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Permanent jobs win at Grosvenor



Union campaigning has delivered 200 new permanent jobs at Grosvenor underground mine as Anglo abandons its 100% labour hire employment model. Workers have welcomed the opportunity for permanent shirts but are disappointed Anglo has opened applications externally.

The MEU is in discussions with Anglo about a draft Enterprise Agreement with industry-leading conditions to cover the new jobs.

This announcement is a win in the MEU's campaign for more permanent jobs at what was a fully labour hire site. Since a devastating explosion in 2020 where 100% labour hire was found to be a contributing factor, Grosvenor workers have been increasing the Union's presence on site and formed a new Lodge.

Grosvenor Lodge President Steve Hall said Anglo had committed to 200 new permanent jobs with another 70 to follow in a later intake. The production workforce of over 300 workers is currently employed through One Key.

"We certainly welcome the opportunity for permanent shirts. It's very disappointing Anglo has opened the process up for external applicants when they have a long-term loyal workforce who have

been through a lot.

"Workers are now worried about whether they will get one of the new jobs or what their future will hold. In a dangerous environment, workers should just have to worry about what's happening underground, not whether they have a job."

The Lodge has been supporting members, keeping them up to date with information about the process.

District President Stephen Smyth said the union was pushing for a guarantee that no existing workers will lose their jobs through the process of replacing labour hire with permanent jobs.

Under the new model for Grosvenor, Anglo will continue to run one development panel through a contractor.

"We will keep advocating for the job security our members deserve. But apart from doing the right thing by workers who have been through so much, in the current climate of labour shortages in mining they simply won't keep people who can't see a pathway to a permanent EA job."

This decision by Anglo is a big step in the right direction towards more permanent jobs. With the introduction of Same Job Same Pay laws, we hope to see more permanent jobs replacing insecure labour hire across the sector.

Green calamari and mouldy sandwiches?

Have you experienced dodgy food while staying at camp? Have you come across or been given green calamari, mouldy sandwiches or raw chicken?

The Western Workers Mine Alliance – our joint venture covering iron ore miners in the Pilbara - is fighting to improve camp conditions on Pilbara mine sites, including addressing food quality in camps after hearing about some of these doozies below:



Shocking images from some mining camps

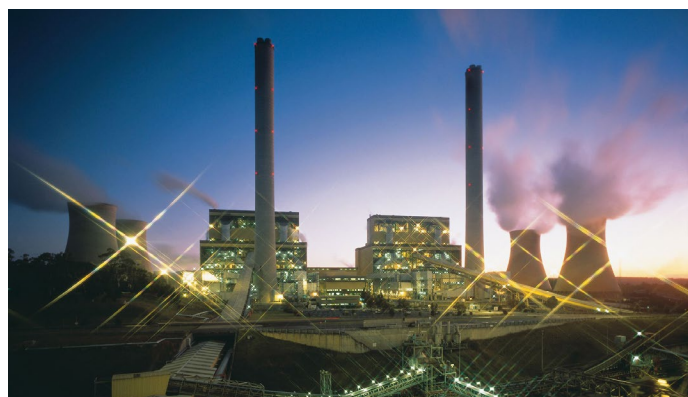
Have you been exposed to unsanitary or unacceptable food. Send us your photos of dodgy camp food at commoncause@meu.org.au.

If you work in WA and stay in a mining camp, please [complete our survey on camp standards](#) here and send in your examples of dodgy, dirty and unacceptable camp conditions.

Mineworkers at Yallourn coal mine don't receive the same redundancy entitlements as workers at Yallourn power station, simply because they are contractors and not employees of EnergyAustralia. An industrial campaign at the mine is seeking to change that.

Yallourn coal miners are employed by contractor RTL after EnergyAustralia outsourced its operation 15 years ago.

Fight for fair contractor entitlements at Yallourn



But while EnergyAustralia says the mineworkers are part of the family – including getting discounts on their retail electricity – they don't shell out for fair entitlements in line with industry standards.

The Yallourn mineworkers, who exclusively supply coal to the Yallourn Power Station, are seeking entitlements comparable to power station workers – especially as the closure date was recently brought forward by four years to 2028.

Victorian District Secretary Mark Richards said that redundancy entitlements should be covered by EnergyAustralia's Just Transition planning.

“These workers have lost four years of work when the closure date was brought forward to 2028. They are concerned it could be brought further forward. EnergyAustralia has a fair agreement in place with its direct workforce at the power station regarding redundancies – but it should do the right thing by its long-term contractors too.”

Redundancy provisions for workers in the coal mine leave them about 30 per cent worse off than power station workers.

The mineworkers have been taking protected industrial action for about six weeks, including bans and stoppages, as they try to secure a fairer Enterprise Agreement.

Workers have agreed to roll over their Enterprise Agreement and are only seeking improved redundancy provisions and a modest pay rise.

Miners support nurses with new hospital fund



Representatives from Grosvenor lodge and Deputy Mayor Kelly Vea Vea with staff at Moranbah Hospital.

Five MEU Lodges have committed to providing long-term support to Moranbah Hospital by setting up a fund, which will help improve living conditions for nurses working in the central Queensland mining hub.

These Lodges include Grosvenor, Moranbah North, Goonyella Riverside, Peak Downs and Broadmeadows.

The fund will go towards the daily operations of the Hospital, with some funds to be dedicated to upgrading the nurses' accommodation.



MEU members long campaigned for improved health services in mining regions like Moranbah. The Union advocated strongly for funds for a new hospital for Moranbah, which was finally announced in last months' state budget.

The new fund continues this great legacy by our members. It has been created as an acknowledgement of the Moranbah Hospital's role in the May 2022 explosion at Grosvenor.

After the five men were severely burnt in the explosion, they were rushed to Moranbah Hospital before they would be airlifted to Brisbane for further care. It was at Moranbah Hospital that the men received life saving care, and through the efforts of the staff were able to resume breathing after the explosion.

"If we didn't have the care of the nurses and staff at Moranbah Hospital, we would have five fatalities on our hands. They simply would not be here today." Grosvenor Lodge Secretary, Scott Jensen said.

Members at Grosvenor Lodge made a donation to Moranbah Hospital to acknowledge the critical work of staff there and have now joined other QLD Lodges to create a new joint fund.

"We are fly in and fly out workers which means that we spend 50% of our life in Moranbah. If something happens, the Moranbah Hospital is the first port of call." Grosvenor President, Steven Hall commented.

"We've also had conversations with the nurses who work there. The nurses are also fly in and fly out workers like us, and the state of the accommodation is enough for some nurses to go running which is why we've created this fund."

The five Lodges had their first joint meeting this month to discuss their plans to provide ongoing support for Moranbah Hospital.

Deadly July – Never to be forgotten



It's known as Deadly July – the month that coal mining communities have endured some of the worst disasters known in our industry's history. For those who have lost their lives, and for the communities, workmates and loved ones they have left behind, the lessons from each event will never be forgotten.

Mount Kembla – 31/7/1902 – 96 killed



Australia's worst industrial disaster struck on 31 July 1902, when 96 miners lost their lives in an explosion at Mt Kembla Colliery in NSW.

There were 280 workers underground at the time of the explosion, including young boys. The explosion was so massive it could be heard 11 kilometres away in Wollongong.

Recovery of the bodies took several days, and all but one were recovered in a courageous rescue operation.

The NSW Parliament suspended sittings, such was the shock felt in the broader population.

Former General Secretary Andrew Vickers says the mine was known to be full of methane gas. "They had little to no safety precautions at the time, often working with naked flames underground," he says.

A Royal Commission followed. The mine owners attempted to establish a theory that the disaster had been caused by a "fall of ground" and not by the presence of dangerous gas levels. However, evidence presented refuted that theory. Not only

was gas present in dangerous quantities but the mine managers were aware of that fact.

Recommendations for safety from the Royal Commission:

- More testing for gas
- Better ventilation
- Improved shot firing practices
- The abolition of naked flame lights.

However, it was not until 1925 that the ventilation system at Mt Kembla was replaced, and it was years before naked lights were finally banned.

Box Flat – 31 July 1972 – 18 killed



A fire followed by an explosion at Box Flat in the Ipswich area of Queensland killed 18 mineworkers and severely injured three others. It was the worst ever industrial disaster to hit the Ipswich area.

At about 6pm on Sunday 30 July 1972, signs were detected of a fire underground. A team went underground to check it. A second team went into the mine some hours later to try to make temporary seals. It was then that a tremendous explosion shattered the mine.

Andrew Vickers says he remembers the day well as he was a cadet mine surveyor at the Goonyella open cut mine in central Queensland at the time. “My Father had worked at Box Flat and I had two Uncles working there too,” he says. “Another of my Uncles was a serving member of the mines

rescue service and knowing some of the people involved came from the mines rescue brigade was very sobering,” he says. “It was terrifying and we frantically tried to contact them to ascertain if they were involved. There was a fire underground, the fan had been turned off over the weekend and when the fan was turned back on there was a recirculation of air pulling gas over the fire and that caused a massive explosion.”

Of the 17 men who were killed, eight were members of the rescue squad that had been called to the mine when the fire was detected.

In the face of the danger of further explosions arising from the raging fire, the grim decision was made to seal the mine, leaving fourteen of the victims entombed. A funeral service was held at the top of the mine.

Safety improvements:

- Consequent legislative and regulatory changes included the introduction of personal filter self-rescuers for all underground miners
- The introduction of gas chromatograph's on the surface to analyse gas samples
- Modern firefighting equipment made available underground.

Appin – 24 July 1979 – 14 killed



An underground explosion, three kilometres from the pithead and 600 metres underground, killed 14 mineworkers in Appin on the NSW south coast.

Ten of those died while having their mid-shift meal

in the crib room. Some of the survivors made it to the surface but were severely burned.

At the time of the explosion there were 45 workers underground, including the union's Lodge President, Dave Kemp. Dave was one of the rescue workers who went back into the mine to recover the bodies. The Southern District Rescue Station Corps, and rescue teams from other collieries also joined in this grim task.

Andrew Vickers says the incident involved the same coal seam as Mt Kembla in 1902 which was known to be full of gas.

"Justice Goran found there had been a methane gas build up and a likely fault in one of the exhaust fans being used underground initiated the explosion and that was followed by a coal dust explosion which was fortunately limited by stone dust and water barriers," he says.

Safety improvements:

- The judicial inquiry that followed found serious communication problems at Appin, which was known to be a gassy mine
- A number of recommendations relating to gas safeguards, including monitoring, warning devices and ventilation
- The appointment of more local safety (check) inspectors.

Moura No.4 – 16 July 1986 – 12 killed



An explosion deep underground at Moura No.

4 mine in Queensland took the lives of 12 coal mineworkers.

On that day there had been 19 men working underground when the explosion claimed 12 lives in an instant. The seven survivors were able to help each other to the surface through clouds of dust and gas.

Recovery plans for the victims were postponed due to the dangerous prevailing conditions, where high gas levels and near zero visibility were encountered. The rescue team was eventually allowed to resume their heartbreaking task, to recover the victims who were workmates and neighbours.

Scientific investigation found the most likely source of ignition was a lock flame safety lamp which was used to actually detect methane in underground coal mines.

Safety improvements:

- Banning of flame safety lamps from underground mines
- Continuous gas monitoring from all sections of the mine, compulsory safety induction training for all mineworkers and the requirement for secondary extraction plans to be developed and approved by the Mines Inspectorate.

South Bulli - 24 July 91 – 3 killed



On 24 July 1991, three mineworkers were asphyxiated by gas released during an outburst of deadly gas at the working face at South Bulli coal mine.

The outburst occurred shortly after restarting the cutting of coal after the miner had been stopped for the routine installation of roof supports.

Although dangerous gases had been detected on numerous occasions as this panel had progressed, no gas had been detected on the shift that the outburst occurred nor for at least the previous six shifts. When previously detected it had been effectively handled as a ventilation problem, not as a precursor to an outburst.

South Bulli Colliery was not classified as an outburst prone mine, with outburst mining procedures only being introduced when an outburst potential was detected.

The investigation report identified that an outburst management plan had been developed, however, it had not been properly implemented and the quality of the mine's outburst plan was poor.

Safety improvements

- Stricter requirements for managing gas outbursts in underground coal mines.

Rest in peace.

Queensland coal industry made to share the good times

Peter Colley
National Research Director



Coal prices at unbelievably high levels are leading to windfall profits for the coal companies. And the Queensland Government has sought to get some of the super-profits as royalties for the people of Queensland. This has in turn led to gnashing of teeth from the Queensland Resources Council and grim warnings about threat to future investment. Who to believe? Let me explain.

Royalties are payments from private companies for access to, and the extraction of, mineral resources that belong to the Australian people. They are not a tax on income as such, but a return to the owners of a resource for granting private companies the right to make money from that resource.

Before the most recent Queensland State Budget, there were three royalty rates on Queensland Coal:

- 7% on coal sold up to A\$100 per tonne
- 12.5% on the value above \$100 per tonne up to A\$150 per tonne
- 15% on the value of coal sold that was above \$150 per tonne.

The Qld govt has introduced three new tiers, but they only apply to amounts above the existing three tiers. They are:

- 20% on the value of coal sold that is between A\$175 and \$225 per tonne
- 30% on the value of coal that is between A\$225 per tonne and A\$300 per tonne
- 40% on the value of coal that is over \$300 per tonne.

In all cases the higher rates are only paid on that part of the value which is above the threshold. So coal companies still only pay 7% on the

They only ever pay 40% on that part of the value that is above \$300 per tonne, if any.

The type of royalty is something like a super-profits tax, in that it is only paid on amounts above a certain level. In this case it is still an “amount per tonne” rather than an “amount per dollar of profits” above a certain level. It has the virtue of being relatively easy to calculate, and is not subject to private companies artificially manipulating their financial accounts (e.g. via high debt levels to related parties) to reduce notional profits.

The Queensland Govt doesn't think it will make a huge amount of extra revenue because the government, like everyone else, doesn't believe that coal prices will remain at very high levels. It thinks it will get an additional \$765 million in 2022-23, but only a further \$435m over the following three years.

It is a very modest take from an industry that, nationally, will earn over A\$100 billion in exports this year and which faces costs that, while increasing, are routinely only a minority of the sale price of the coal.

Glencore recently forecast that cash profit per tonne had jumped in first half 2022 from an estimated US\$82.90 per tonne to over US\$154 per tonne. It's mostly in NSW rather than Queensland. BHP is mostly in Queensland and it will be very interesting to see the cash profits for their coal sector for the financial year just ended.

No one is basing investment decisions on current coal prices, which are high due to an unusual mix of one-off events. There is the recovery from the pandemic, the expensive reconfiguring of the global coal market due to the China ban on Australian coal, and now the Russia-Ukraine war that is prompting Europe to restart coal power stations so as to rely less on Russian gas (and phase out Russian coal entirely). The severe weather has also played a role in limiting production.

The industry journal the Australian Coal Report concluded that “Qld royalty changes irk industry but long term impact muted”. That does sum it up.

Profits may well stay higher for longer, as production is not increasing even though actual demand is still slowly growing (though widely expected to decline beyond 2025 or 2030). There are very few investors willing to invest in new coal production.

One thing that the Qld government has not done, and should have, is allocate a substantial chunk of the new revenue to coal regions – especially those with the coal power stations that will eventually close – and to diversify coal regions so that they have more and different industry for the time when overseas coal demand goes into decline.

It's time for a national plan to support energy workers

Tony Maher
General President



For years now, our members in power stations have been hit with a succession of announcements about closures, closure dates being brought forward and heated debate about the future of their industry.

The most recent announcements have been in Western Australia, where the government has announced all coal-fired power stations will be closed by 2030.

The mining and energy sector is undergoing significant change and it deserves an industry-wide response and long-term management. This is why we are fighting for a national body, such as an Energy Transition Authority, that would be responsible for managing the energy transition in the interests of workers and communities.

Australia is facing the closure of all its coal-fired power stations. While current operating timelines extend to 2050 for the youngest in the fleet, Australia's Energy Market Operator (AEMO) predicts more early closures will be announced with 60% of current capacity withdrawn by 2030.

Our members in coal-fired power stations and the coal mines that supply them are at the frontline of major structural economic change and they are calling out for planning and support.

With a timeline for change laid out before us and international examples of how to manage structural adjustment well, we have an opportunity to develop a plan for energy transition that leaves no-one behind.

Regions including Victoria's Latrobe Valley, Western Australia's Collie, the Hunter Valley, Central Coast and Lithgow in NSW, and south-

east and central Queensland have powered Australia for decades. They don't deserve to pay the price for decarbonisation of our economy through loss of well-paid jobs, economic activity and opportunities for the future.

International experience shows that the ingredients for successful structural change include planning, substantial investment and tripartite engagement including government, industry and unions.

An Energy Transition Authority would bring government, industry and unions together to develop plans to support workers, ensure investment in affected communities and manage power station closures.

Politically, this is also an opportune time. When Hazelwood was shutting down, I tried hard to drive some sense into the Coalition. Their response was that they don't interfere with the labour market, and that they weren't interested in transition or finding jobs for people. As far as the Coalition was concerned, once a redundancy cheque has been handed over, the obligation is over.

With Labor in power federally, we can get in the door for talks. During the campaign, Labor said they didn't want to hold anyone back or leave anyone behind. We will put the new Government to the test on that and encourage the new Government to lead the discussion on this critical question.

Upheaval in the energy industry is not going to blindside us, however it is approaching rapidly. We need to put in place a considered plan that leaves no one behind, and the establishment of an Energy Transition Authority would be an appropriate starting point to do that.

