

# Staff at the coalface

APESMA – Collieries Staff Division

October

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## *Appin denies deputies drop in the ocean*

**By Catherine Bolger - Director**

Appin Mine Deputies have been told by BHP Illawarra Coal management that there is “no money in the bucket” for their pay claim, even though the mine announced a \$667 Million dollar profit in the 2011/2012 financial year.

As a result, Appin Deputies will vote this Thursday and Friday to take protected action – a rare, historic step for Deputies at Appin and one borne out of frustration after five months of unsuccessful negotiations.

This comes at a time when BHP has generated massive profits in the Illawarra – 2,258 Billion in earnings over the last 4 years.

It is hard to understand why they are creating a dispute over an increase of

approximately 0.01% for frontline supervisors, when BHP is sitting on top of that huge profit result.

At the same time other Staff at Appin have been trying for over 27 months for an enterprise agreement.

Appin Management is still denying them an enterprise agreement despite two rulings of Fair Work Australia saying that they had not been bargaining in good faith, which was subsequently upheld by the Federal Court.

The question members at Appin are asking - is why is BHP adopting such a hard line approach to their people, when profits are so good?

And why is it so hard for BHP to listen to their own Staff?

## *Organising across the country*

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Since the last staff at the coalface, APESMA CSD organisers have continued to go out and meet members across the country.

Organisers have been to mine sites around Mudgee, Muswellbrook, Maitland, Lake Macquarie, Lithgow, Wollongong, Emerald, Blackwater, Tieri and Moranbah.

Have you not had an organiser come to your mine? Call **(02) 9269 0688** and we'll arrange a time for an organiser to come out and meet with members.

## *The great un-truth – Tom Pacey Organiser*

Over the last few months the Black Coal industry has gone through a period of readjustment.

For the last few years the coal price for both metallurgical and thermal has reached unprecedented highs.

This has lead mining companies to report massive profits to their shareholders and the market.

Yet these substantial profits have not filtered down to the employees who made it happen.

There are still labour shortages across the Black Coal industry.

In some mine sites across NSW and Queensland selected redundancies are occurring but to suggest that the boom is over is wrong.

As coal companies in parts of Australia begin to tighten their belts members should be reminded that they are the driving force, a valued commodity, just as much as the coal in the ground.

The time you spend at work and the specific skills you possesses need to be properly remunerated.

Companies will suggest that capital spending projects have eaten away the profits and spot prices for coal are showing that profit margins are slimmer than they were during the peak years.

Yet, even the selective redundancies and the movement away from 7 day rosters to 5 days are not slowing the pace of production. Members are being told to

work harder for longer without compensation.

Billion dollar entities have the capacity of paying Collieries' staff correct redundancy packages, work pattern allowances and overtime rates.

APESMA continues to push for open, honest and transparent processes to ensure members are getting a fair deal even as the mining companies spin their tale of despair.

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### *Queensland Round Up*

#### *Kristy Harper*

As you would be aware, the QLD Coal Industry is going through significant changes that have affected APESMA members, including wide spread redundancies, mine site restructures, and even the closing of mines.

APESMA has pushed to engage in consultation with mine sites prior to them making significant changes affecting APESMA members.

Early consultation with your mine site has led to good outcomes for members facing redundancy, such as Companies agreeing to look at a voluntary redundancy process prior to forced redundancies, considering the use of a job swap register for those who want to take redundancy in place of those who don't, and ensuring that correct entitlements are paid on all redundancies.

Fortunately, APESMA has been able to rectify errors and address potential issues with

redundancies and redeployments before members have been locked into the process.

This is a timely reminder that if you are facing redundancy or redeployment - contact APESMA immediately - so you can get advice on your entitlements and make an informed decision about your future.

With cutbacks, a lot of members have also found themselves being asked to do more without further acknowledgement.

Deputies, Undermanagers and Control Room Operators at one mine recently found themselves being asked to do longer shift times which would result in a significant increase in weekly hours, without extra payment.

APESMA members got together collectively and expressed their concerns to the Company that they felt the change was unreasonable without adequate remuneration.

As a result, the Company agreed to pay overtime to those staff who worked above their contracted hours each day as a result of the new roster change.

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