

Press release

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Rio Tinto coal mine employees to gain formal recognition for inhouse training

Tom Robertson and Kristin McKie are set to add a new qualification to their toolbox.

Tom is an operator who, along with many of his workmates, started at Blair Athol Mine 25 years ago; while Kristin McKie, also an operator, joined the mine just two years ago.

They're two of more than 100 employees at Rio Tinto Coal Australia's Blair Athol Mine who have signed up to enrol in a Certificate III in Surface Coal Operations, a qualification that is transferable nationally within the resource industry.

A component of the Certificate III programme is being offered using recognition of prior learning for the mine's employees who already hold the relevant in-house competencies. This process allows them to have the skills they have attained recognised without having to formally complete all 15 modules of the programme.

A similar programme is also being conducted at a number of Rio Tinto operations.

However, in the case of Blair Athol Mine, general manager operations – Clermont Region Andrew Cole said the initiative will be particularly helpful to employees like Tom and Kristin in finding new work opportunities as roles are gradually reduced at the mine in the lead-up to closure in 2016, when reserves are completely mined out.

"We have already begun Blair Athol Mine's transition planning towards a 75 per cent reduction in production down to a three million tonne per annum rate in 2010 and beyond," Mr Cole said.

"Key to this entire transition period is our 'My Future Plan' process which has been developed to assist each member of our workforce individually through these changes.

"We have conducted one-on-one talks with every employee to discuss what they would like to do in the future, and how we can help them to meet their career goals.

"Through this process we have sought the opportunity for external recognition of Blair Athol Mine's own in-house training."

Training advisor, Tamara Chapple, said: “The Certificate III suits many of our employees in regards to the type of qualification that they will have accumulated over time.

“For tradesmen, this is recognition of their skills in the mining industry, not just the trade.”

Training co-ordinator - production, Ellena Bray, said: “This will help employees gain future work at any other coal mining operation in Australia.”

Mr Cole said: “It’s another way that is helping us to fairly and effectively transition our workforce and provide support where and when it is needed.”

The Certificate III programme is being offered free to mine employees.

Blair Athol Mine is working with registered training organisation Careers Australia Institute of Training through an umbrella services agreement to facilitate the process and in providing certifications.

A total of 108 operators at Blair Athol Mine have registered for the Cert III in Surface Coal Operations.

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