

Dr Nikki Williams
Chief Executive, NSW Minerals Council
Launch of the 4th Dungog Film Festival
29 April 2010 – Dendy Cinemas, Circular Quay, Sydney NSW

Well, here we are again – NSW Mining – the very proud presenting sponsor of this extraordinary Australian Film Festival. Our third year running and the fourth year of the Festival.

The critics said that the special relationship and association we've established with the Festival wouldn't last. So it gives me great pleasure to stand here today. We're no one hit wonder. We're a trilogy... and counting.

NSW Mining's continued support over the past three years – not just cheque book support but the sleeves rolled up – blood, sweat and tears variety, has enabled this Festival to evolve and produce a bigger and better Festival each year.

In supporting this unique event, NSW Mining's objectives are to:

- Inspire energy, innovation and creativity
- Create economic and artistic opportunities
- Grow diverse regional communities.

Our sponsorship is an investment in the economic future and social fabric of the Hunter Valley – working together with the Dungog Film Festival to bring cutting edge culture to the region as well as providing another platform for local business to develop a more diverse and prosperous Hunter economy. There's no conspiracy in ensuring that the Hunter community has a thriving arts and cultural scene: it's a barometer of the strength of the region.

Our sponsorship is also a partnership with the Dungog community and we've backed that up by contributing funds to the Dungog High School to buy film and editing equipment to inspire the next generation of film makers. Last year, these very same students produced a fabulous short film themed around the Festival called *Dead Dog Dreamin*, which screened to great acclaim on the final night of the Festival and I understand they've got something up their sleeves again this year!

NSW Mining has also made a small contribution towards staging the Dungog Main Street Parade this year, organised independently by the Dungog community, to showcase to the thousands of visitors the proud township and shire that is Dungog.

Of particular relevance to most of you here today, NSW Mining's sponsorship is an investment in the celebration and preservation of Australian stories. Australian stories, whether they are told through film, stage or literature are unique and have much to contribute to the rest of the world.

Mining plays a big role in the stories of thousands of people in the Hunter region and indeed hundreds of thousands throughout Australia. We hope the Dungog Film Festival inspires the community to explore new opportunities. Indeed, we hope the Australian film industry is inspired and encouraged to continue to search deeper and in more unusual places to unearth our extraordinary and diverse Aussie stories and the remarkable people eager to tell them and have them be told to the world.

For example, we applaud the production and recent release of *Beneath Hill 60*, which tells the remarkable story of Australian miners, including a father and son from Wallsend in the Hunter, who were recruited into the army in World War I for the specific purpose of building tunnels under enemy lines on the Western Front. I understand there will be a special screening of the film at this year's Festival with the Director in attendance.

In itself, the Dungog Film Festival is a remarkable Australian story – the “biggest festival of Australian films on the planet”. Indeed, each year the Festival has grown in content and attendance, estimated to be worth more than \$2 million annually to the local economy.

Mining too is a big contributor to the Hunter economy, directly employing more than 14,000 people and indirectly supporting another 65,000 or so, jobs. Around \$2 billion a year is poured back into the local economy through payments to local suppliers, plus millions more going to local businesses where the miners and their families spend their wages.

NSW Mining's sponsorship is also about mucking in and helping out throughout the Festival.

There's a truck load of help required when you're hosting around 6,000 visitors in a weekend, operating three cinemas continuously for three days, running numerous workshops and pulling off three major social events for up to 700 guests at a time. In addition to the many tireless volunteers, the NSW Mining team is on the ground, behind the scenes, sleeves up and gum boots on – literally – to help put this show on.

Last year, amongst the mud, sludge and continuous rain, it was the NSW Mining team who worked around the clock each and every day of the Festival to ensure the Miners' Marquee was accessible and operational for each event. And each event was a tremendous success, including NSW Mining's now infamous *Rock 'n' Reel* party, which was at capacity with over 700 guests.

This year, NSW Mining's party, and the Festival's other major social events, will be hosted in Dungog High School's main gymnasium which, for the purposes of the Festival, will be branded "The Main Event Centre". The Main Event Centre might be a smaller venue with less capacity, but the party will be bigger and better than ever. With limited tickets available, it's a definite case of "get in quick"!

NSW Mining congratulates and commends the Festival for its untiring determination to produce a program each year that is constantly innovating and adding new dimensions to what is already a jammed pack and complex program. You'll hear a bit more about the Speed Auditioning element of the program a little later on – but what a fantastic and very unusual opportunity for the "undiscovered" to project themselves into the world of film. And in their acceptance speech at the AFI Awards, they'll be able to say it all started at the Dungog Film Festival.

To Allannah, Stavros and your extraordinary Festival team, on behalf of NSW Mining and the industry it represents, I wish you yet another "ripper" Aussie event.

I look forward to seeing you all there at the end of May.

Thank you.