

**Skills on Show Launch
Newcastle Showground
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**Scott Keenan
Deputy Director Communications
NSW Minerals Council**

Check against delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. It was good to hear about the work that is being done at the Hunter Valley Training Company where so many of our apprentices and trainees are learning their trades. Our former Chairman, Bob Cameron, is now Chairman at the Hunter Valley Training Company and so the bond between us will continue to be a strong one into the future.

The mining industry is an important driver of the Hunter's economy and it's ingrained in the region's DNA. It's got a long and proud history and it's going to be a big part of many people's lives over the next 30 years and beyond.

There are already around 20,000 people directly employed in mining in the Hunter Valley and for each job there is roughly 3.5 people who are supporting the industry indirectly in service industries that supply our mines and in the businesses where our miners spend their higher than average wages.

There's a lot of debate about mining and sometimes the economic benefits get lost in a storm of negativity and conflict.

The resilience of the minerals industry was one of the reasons why this country managed to keep out of trouble during the GFC. The benefits of the boom are flowing across the economy and more deeply than is commonly believed, according to a recent report for the ANZ Bank. And the growing coal sector has played a big part in driving

down unemployment in the Hunter to just 3.5 per cent in December according to the Hunter Valley Research Foundation.

But that story of growth and prosperity doesn't end here.

The demand for the region's resources in places like Japan, China and Korea means that there is a huge opportunity for the next generation of miners, engineers, trades, health and safety professionals and environmental experts to join our ranks.

And that's why we welcome the opportunity to showcase the best of what we have to offer here in the Hunter at this year's Skills on Show exhibition. Working in the mining industry can be highly rewarding and can take you around the country and even all over the world.

For many people, their mining story starts here in the Hunter Valley in engineering degrees at the University of Newcastle or through apprenticeships and traineeships at our mines.

A recent survey of our members found: 75% have apprentices or trainees employed and most are planning to put on a greater number in 2012; 95% of trainees or apprentices complete their training and 90% stay on with their employer after finishing their training; and 98% of apprentices and trainees are recruited locally.

Mount Arthur Coal announced last week that another 11 apprentices from Muswellbrook, Singleton, Denman and Scone had been added to their workforce.

And as the industry grows, there will be ongoing opportunities for the Hunter's school-leavers for a range of careers in mining.

The Federal Government's conservative estimates suggest that the resources sector will need an extra 77,500 people by 2015 to support the new projects coming online and something like 11,000 of those will be needed here in New South Wales.

And we're not just looking for men.

Women currently make up about 10 per cent of the State's mining workforce. Some of them even work at the coal face. But there aren't enough women in non-traditional roles like trades and mining engineers.

That's why I am pleased to announce today that the NSW Minerals Council will be launching the 'NSW Women in Mining Network' on International Women's Day next month to encourage more women into mining.

We'll kick it off with forums here in the Hunter and across the State to better connect the women already in the industry and to find out why women haven't entered the industry in big numbers in the past. Hopefully we can make a positive impression on some of the young women that we meet here in Newcastle and the figure of 10% will start edging up over the next few years.

NSW Mining is proud to support 'Skills on Show 2012' along with our members Centennial Coal, BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and Anglo American.

We're all committed to great training, employing local people wherever we can and to strong relationships with our education partners and service providers so that NSW miners continue to be world class miners.