

**Proceedings of the  
1<sup>st</sup> Australasian Coal Operators  
Conference *COAL98***

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# PREFACE

*COAL98* is the first industry-oriented Australasian operators conference devoted to coal mining. The theme *Improving Fundamental Practices* was adopted because the Organising Committee believes that such improvement is critical to the industry's future and viability particularly here in the Illawarra region in NSW where the coal industry is a major contributor in providing employment and revenue. Since the mid-1800's the coal industry has been a major contributor to the Australia conomy. The coal industry is currently under extreme pressure as easier won resources diminish and global forces continue to contain real prices. What operating practices will enable us to ensure the future viability of the industry throughout Australasia? *COAL98* will make significant contribution to the development of the industry over the next few years as it will provide participants from the industry with valuable information to keep abreast with current developments. The information will also challenge participants to review work practices and encourage implementation of the best operation practices. Hopefully *COAL98* will be a vehicle through which your firm can develop and expand.

The technical papers which are presented in this volume are expected to cover the ambit of coal mining; from exploration to operations and through to shipping. The papers have been prepared by many of the industry's leading and dynamic operators and practitioners and there is no doubt their input will induce critical thinking and encourage creativity. While some ideas will be easily embraced, some thought-provoking ones will lead to energetic debate and discussions which in itself could be a source of knowledge.

*COAL98* will be opened by Senator Warwick Parer, Federal Minister for Resources followed by two Keynote Addresses from Kevin Crutchfield (incoming President of Cyprus Australia Coal Company) and John Maitland (National General President of the United Mine Workers Division, CFMEU). The speakers will outline the issues facing the industry from the perspectives of government, operators/corporate, and employees/unions. It is expected that the Keynote Addresses will deal with projected global marketing trends and developments, with particular mention of the current Asian economic crisis. An assessment of the potential impact of the crisis on Australian coal operations will be addressed. The speakers will seek to reinforce the need to further improve productivity at mines and reduce costs throughout the entire coal chain. Another Keynote Address on Mine Safety by Bob Martin (NSW Minister of Mineral Resources and Fisheries) on Day 3 of the Conference, will address all the relevant issues that impact on and contribute to the future success of the industry.

The Conference activities include three one-day workshops covering the topics *Underground Coal Mine Planning* (offered by ECS International Pty Ltd), *Geotechnical Design of Coal Mines* (offered by Strata Control Technology Pty Ltd) and *Coal Gas Measurement and Control* (offered by GeoGAS Sytems Pty Ltd). Field trips to Port Kembla Coal Terminal, Blast Furnance, local coal mines and the Appin EDL Gas Utilisation Plant have also been arranged.

To keep the industry abreast with the ever-changing techonogy, it is planned for subsequent conferences in this series to be held every two to three years at an Australian major coal mining locality, the future organisers will definitely need your valuable support.

**Ernest Y Baafi**  
***COAL98* Conference Convenor**  
**University of Wollongong**  
**February, 1998**