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Mine adversity provokes change

Written by ALLISON GOLSBY, CEO, CONSULTMINE



Allison Golsby proves hard work pays off.

I was born in Cowra, New South Wales, a region noted for wheat and fat lambs, but no destiny beckoned for me as a farmer's wife, despite my father's ambitions for me. After an early career as shed hand, mining gofer and plant operator in places as diverse and distant as Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Kununurra, Argyle and Nhulunbuy, I settled somewhat in Parkes NSW, working for Rio Tinto at Northparkes Mines for 13 years.

In 1999 [24 November], whilst underground [working as an underground technician], I survived the Northparkes Airblast*. This was an event that forced me to confront my mortality. I wondered if I had died, what people would have remembered about me. What would my legacy have been? What had I made of my life?

While I had completed some mining specific qualifications to that time, I had never completed any university degrees. I saw others making what I thought were bad decisions hurting and sometimes tragically, injuring and killing people. I realised that mere mining experience would not give me the authority or standing to make changes. I needed the university degrees.

So, determined, I took my mining experience and brains (already a member of Australian Mensa) off to the University of NSW and with a few years hard study accumulated a Masters in Mining Engineering, a Masters in Geomechanics and a Graduate Diploma in Mine Ventilation. Getting into my stride, I am currently reading at Dundee University in Scotland for the Conjoint Masters in Business Administration and Masters in Law, specialising in Australian Resource Law and Policy.

The formal qualifications also gave me better employment prospects. I found a new husband who lived in Sydney and we moved to the Western Slopes of the Blue Mountains so that I was close to the Clarence Colliery, near the Zig Zag Railway, East of Lithgow and I took up an appointment as technical services superintendent and ventilation officer. But it was cold in winter.

Offered a chance to move to sunny Queensland, I packed off my husband and two cattle dogs and moved to Tieri. Xstrata made me an offer I could not refuse and we enjoyed living in Central Queensland.

As an employee of a mining company to a large extent you have to do as you are told. As a consultant you are able to set the highest standards in everything you do. You are able to tell mine owners and operators what they should be doing, rather than being forced to accept what they actually do. So when the opportunity arose, we moved to Brisbane and I took up an appointment as CEO of ConsultMine, a boutique mining consultancy house.

I am now working harder than ever before, but have the freedom to pick and choose mining assignments. I am regularly called upon to speak and present at mining conferences.

It is important to make a positive change. I want my legacy to be that I made a difference. Making the time to get out amongst the people in the mining industry enables me to mentor and encourage others, particularly women to realise their full potential; to be everything they can be and not just accept what others define for them as their role in life.

**The Northparkes Airblast claimed the lives of four mine workers on November 24 at the Northparkes copper and gold mine near*

Parkes, in central west New South Wales. The men, aged 33 to 47, were killed instantly when millions of tonnes of ore and earth collapsed suddenly causing a catastrophic air blast through an access tunnel in which they were working 140m below ground.

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