

NEWS RELEASE

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BHP BILLITON OPENS CAVAL RIDGE METALLURGICAL COAL MINE IN CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

Today BHP Billiton Coal President, Dean Dalla Valle, was joined by the Hon. Tony Abbott MP, Prime Minister of Australia, and joint venture partner Mitsubishi in a ceremony to open the US\$3.4 billion Caval Ridge Mine, which has created around 500 jobs in Queensland.

Caval Ridge Mine is the BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance's (BMA)¹ eighth operation in the region and will initially produce up to 5.5 million tonnes per annum of premium quality metallurgical coal. The mine was delivered below budget, and produced its first coal three months ahead of schedule.

Mr Dalla Valle said the official opening was an opportunity for BHP Billiton and Mitsubishi to showcase a world class new mine in Queensland, which will contribute to Australia's coal export industry.

"Today's opening of the Caval Ridge Mine is a significant milestone for BHP Billiton. The operation will produce metallurgical coal for the steel industry and has been constructed with the latest technology to be one of the most productive, sustainable and highly performing metallurgical coal mines in the world," he said.

"Energy efficiency is a key focus for the mine and was built into its design and management system. This includes the use of highly efficient equipment and the optimisation of truck, shovel and dragline movements. This improves the efficiency of our energy use and helps minimise our greenhouse gas emissions.

"Since commencing operation, the Caval Ridge team has already achieved an Australian record for the amount of overburden moved by a shovel in one week."

Mr Dalla Valle noted that recently BHP Billiton's Coal business has needed to make some difficult decisions to ensure its operations remain sustainable.

"We are confident that if we maintain our productivity focus then we will continue to have a globally competitive business that will provide employment opportunities for generations to come," he said.

Mr Dalla Valle said he was proud of the diverse workforce at Caval Ridge Mine, which helps shape a positive and productive culture at site.

"Caval Ridge Mine's workforce, who commute from Cairns and Brisbane, include 21 per cent females, three per cent Indigenous and 43 per cent new-to-industry employees. We have invested considerably in recruiting and training new entrants to the coal industry who will work alongside some of our experienced operators," he said.

¹ A 50-50 joint venture between BHP Billiton and Mitsubishi Development Pty Ltd.

“Having a FIFO operation enabled us to reach a wider potential employee pool across the State, not only bringing greater diversity but also enabling us to share the economic benefits of the mine more broadly. Over 30,000 people applied for around 950 roles at Caval Ridge and its sister mine Daunia.”

BHP Billiton, in partnership with Mitsubishi, is the largest employer in the Bowen Basin region, with over 7,000 employees. Of the eight operations, six have a residential workforce and FIFO is just one part of the company's workforce offering enabling choice for employees on where they would like to work and live.

Further information on BHP Billiton can be found at: www.bhpbilliton.com.

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