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Media Release:

50 years on the job calls for a celebration

With a ceremonial cake cutting, Yancoal Australia's Premier Coal operation is celebrating employee Robert Graham for his 50 years of commitment to the company.

Starting his career as a 15-year old in the underground mining team, Robert has worked in several roles over the five decades and witnessed a significant amount of change in the mining industry, especially when it comes to safety.

In his first role, Robert was a conveyor belt attendant with responsibility for directing the coal to the correct location and ensuring there were no blockages. As a junior in the mine, he also had the unlucky job of having to go to the furthest point of the underground mine to check the water levels for the bore pumps that drained the water out of the mine for the power station. This was often a scary experience due to the conditions and Robert encountered many large vermin along the way.

In the 1980s, Robert worked in a variety of exciting positions in the open cut mine, operating trucks, loaders, and dozers and spent eight years in the pit dewatering team. He studied at the Collie School of Mines, achieving a Diploma in Mining which enabled a promotion to Supervisor, which Robert enjoyed every much. In 1999 with the introduction of modular mining, he moved into the office as a Dispatch Supervisor and remains in that role today.

Robert Graham is proud to have served in mining for 50 years.

"The industry has evolved and changed for the better over the years. Once upon a time we were digging in the pit with hand shovels and scoops, and trucks could only carry 35 tonnes of coal and dozers lacked air conditioning and heating. The manual excavation was tough on the body and mind.

"The most drastic change is that we are far more safety conscious now and this has helped save lives. Safety is embedded in our culture and taken very seriously onsite, which is vital.

"I have enjoyed the journey over 50 years. I look forward to work every day, especially the people who have made my experience so positive at Premier Coal.

"Thanks to my managers for the recognition of this 50-year career milestone. Mining is in my blood, dating back to my grandfather and I have no plans to retire yet.

"Every day I live by one golden rule, which is to treat everyone the way I would like to be treated and it has never failed me," said Robert.

Premier Coal Operations Manager Jim Falconer was proud to shine a light on Robert's service.

“Robert has been instrumental to the Premier Coal team over his 50 years and should be congratulated for his achievements and dedication.

“We all love to hear his stories and memories from when it all began, and his talents and efforts have contributed to our success over the years.

“We are hugely grateful for his unwavering loyalty and commitment and wish him the best,” said Jim.

The milestone was marked with a team celebration where Robert cut a cake and received a gift for his five decades of service. Robert has no current retirement plans and remains a central part of the Premier team.

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