

# Australia: WSWS speaks to Cobar workers about mine disaster

Our reporters  
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*World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to Cobar workers yesterday about the underground explosion that killed Holly Clarke, 24, and Ambrose Patrick McMullen, 59, early Tuesday at Endeavor Mine just outside Cobar in far-west New South Wales (NSW).

Another young woman, Mackenzie Stirling, was injured, transported to hospital in Orange and is now recovering at home.

Just three days after the tragedy, Polymetals Resources Ltd, which owns the mine, has announced that work will resume next Wednesday, even though the investigation has barely started into what caused the explosion.

A **tradesman** said he avoided working at Endeavor because of the mine's reputation: "A lot of wild stuff goes on there. Talking to people that have come back, who have done work blocks out there, I've heard enough that I was like, 'I'm just going to stay away from there.' I work at all the other mines around, doing maintenance.

"I do know that the guy who died was very much known to be very professional, very skilled and safety-conscious. Everyone knows that, so it's confusing. It makes you think it must have been equipment or something that's caused this.

"I've got family who worked with him for about seven years, and they reckon he was the guy you'd want to work with."

Asked about Polymetals' announcement that workers would return to Endeavor on Wednesday, he said: "It does negatively impact the town when the mine's shut, because a good percentage of the people here are working there, it's not an insignificant number. So you don't want it shut, but then you certainly don't want people getting killed either.

"If it was a fault in the equipment that let the charges

go early, so many mines all use the same equipment. It's a real problem. Do they look at the serial numbers of the batch of that explosive and don't touch it until it's all been examined?

"When it's not a clear cause, that makes it difficult to know, could it happen again? If there was a clear failure somewhere, you could say 'let's make sure that's not happening anywhere else.'"

The small community of Cobar has about 3,500 people, most of them employed directly or indirectly in mining, who are still attempting to deal with the tragedy.

**Rachel**, a mental health support professional and longtime Cobar resident, spoke about the ongoing effect of a tragedy like Tuesday's explosion. She explained that her husband's father had been killed in the mines. "Losing his father at the age of three, down the shaft, has always impacted him.

"Something like this re-triggers every single person who's ever been affected by any sort of trauma. It's there for life—it's not something that goes away. You're going to see the repercussions of this for years to come. There's been a few different incidents where there's been a couple of people gone and it's devastating to the town.

"Every time someone does pass, it brings up all the old traumas for the families. But we do have a beautiful town, and they all come together. They all do the best they can do for each other and support one another other."



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