

'Fit for Change' to finish well at Jeebropilly Open Cut

New Hope Group

The problem:

Coal mining has existed in the Ipswich region for more than a century and has provided a livelihood for many generations of miners. However, at the end of 2019 the last operating coal mine in the region, Jeebropilly, will close, signalling the end of an era.

With an embedded workforce of 87 people, most of who have only ever worked in coal mines, it was imperative they be given the skills to move on after the mine closed.

However, with a broad demographic, no one program would be suitable, with some workers looking towards retirement, others committed to staying in the industry, while some were interested in transitioning into other fields.

Consideration also had to be given to the families of the workers and how the impending closure would impact the entire community.

While technical skills were a consideration, the main focus of the program was to ensure all workers had the emotional, mental and life skills to not only survive but to thrive after the closure of the Jeebropilly Mine.

The Solution:

Jeebropilly has a culture that encourages its workers to be healthy, happy and safe both at work and at home.

With the closure of the mine looming large, it was clear there was an air of impending doom, with many workers at a loss as to what was next.

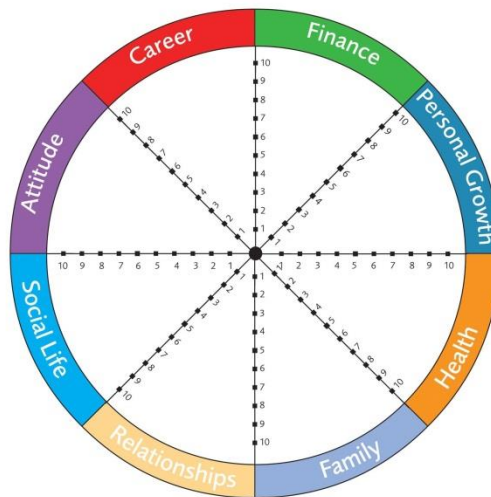
Jeebropilly's Health and Safety Committee, which is made up of volunteers from every area of operations, took charge of the situation and quickly surmised they needed to hear from the workforce about what was important to them.

Every worker at Jeebropilly was surveyed regarding their future (whether it be retirement, continuing to work in the industry or moving to another sector), and the resources they needed to get there.

Given the uncertainty around their futures, the Committee decided to take their award winning 'Live Well, Work Well' program to another level to better suit the diverse needs of the workforce.

The original 'Live Well, Work Well' program leveraged six key strategies (Movement, Treatment, Thinking, Eating, Ergonomics and Living) to boost awareness of healthy behaviours and gave employees free access to numerous initiatives including onsite physiotherapy, annual health checks and skin checks.

The Health and Safety Committee chose to expand the program to incorporate the Wellness Wheel (below), which, when used effectively can help create balanced wellness in your life, something the Jeebropilly employees were hungry for.



Armed with a wealth of data from the workforce, detailing their hopes and dreams, along with their fears, the Committee created the 'Fit for Change' program which would not only address the workforce's concerns but help them thrive post the Jeebropilly Mine closure.

The 'Fit for Change' program incorporated a variety of tangible tactics to boost morale and give employees the information and skills they requested, including:

- Monthly Toolbox Talks which included call to action information and handouts;
- Daily pre-start activations / stretches / tools to motivate employees to be in a healthy / happy / safe mindset before shifts;
- Access to onsite physiotherapy and other allied health and wellness professionals;
- Health referrals including First Consult Free and the Employee Assistance Program;
- Annual health checks, skin checks and flu vaccinations;

- Challenges to build self-efficacy;
- Tailored coaching which included goal setting;
- Upskilling Committee members to become Health and Safety leaders.

The Health and Safety Committee strategically chose to bring in subject matter experts to bolster the 'Fit for Change' program. A snapshot includes

- Health;
 - Man UP! Know your number (prostate health) – Jill Costello.
 - Onsite life coaching at crib and in-cabins. This session walked employees through the Wellness Wheel, and allowed them to better understand their goals and results.
 - Drug and alcohol education with Kim Beasley-Scott.
 - Bioelectrical impedance analysis and health checks with Healthy Lifestyles Australia.
- Attitude;
 - Mates helping mates – the value of Peer Support Officers.
 - James Woods shared his remarkable story (James was left a paraplegic following a mining accident) and detailed the importance of staying focussed and making every day count.
- Finance;
 - Being financially fit for change – a six month program with Francis Rigby from Financial Advice Matters.
 - Redundancy calculator.
- Sleep;
 - Bonnie Teschner, Manager of Sleep Services Toowoomba presented *Sleep Apnoea – do you have it?*
- Relationships and family;
 - Mental health advocate, coach and personal trainer Tobes O'Regan discussed relationships and revealed the most important relationship you have is the one with yourself.
- Career.
 - Preparing you for change –
 - Part A (resume writing, cover letters and online job searching).
 - Part B (interview preparation and practise – what to do and what not to do).
 - Recruitment expo.

A highlight of the 'Fit for Change' program was the *Finishing Well* dinner. Former rugby league players Chris Walker and Isaak Ah Mau spoke about life after football. Former Australian Women's Weekly Editor Susan Duncan spoke about her transition into retirement, while FIFO Supervisor Scott Perina discussed transitioning within the mining sector.

Benefits:

The 'Fit for Change' program transformed the outlook of New Hope's Jeebropilly employees, in spite of the pending closure of the mine.

While many programs achieve significant buy-in from employees, the 'Fit for Change' program has seen 100 per cent participation from everyone on site.

More than 70 per cent of the Jeebropilly workforce have prioritised their health and wellbeing and undergone bioelectrical impedance analysis and regular health checks, more than double best practice industry benchmarks.

Additional benefits include:

- Health;
 - A greater understanding of prostate cancer and its associated risks.
 - Heightened awareness of drug and alcohol dependence.
- Attitude;
 - The value of Peer Support Officers.
 - The importance of staying focussed and making every day count.
- Finance;
 - A better understanding of budgeting and cash flow when transitioning to a new job.
- Sleep;
 - The importance of sleep.
- Relationships and family;
 - A greater understanding of mental health triggers.
 - The importance of seeking support when necessary.
- Career.
 - How to craft a resume and cover letter.
 - The best way to search for a new job.

Created following outreach to the workforce, the 'Fit for Change' program demystified the uncertainty surrounding the employees' future and gave them a clear roadmap and the tools to either retire, stay in the industry or transition into another field.

The majority of Jeebropilly employees have already plotted their next steps, including a number of employees who have already launched their own small businesses in preparation for life after the mine closes.

Created on a foundation of transparency and regular communication, the 'Fit for Change' program has also allowed the wider mine community to prepare for the

mine's closure, safe in the knowledge New Hope was doing everything it could to support employees during this difficult time.

The 'Fit for Change' program has also suspended a forecast dip in morale, with spirits at Jeebropilly surprisingly high despite the looming closure of the mine.

The program, which detailed the importance of staying focussed and making every day count and also allowed the workforce to prioritise safety, with records showing there have been no serious incidents or claims in the past six months.

Transferability:

There is enormous potential for the 'Fit for Change' program to be used, modified or implemented throughout the resources sector.

There are more than 400 mines currently operating in Australia, however many will reach the end of their working life in the coming decade, having serious repercussions for employees, many of whom have only worked in the mining industry.

Management at these mines will quickly discover there is no one program which upskills employees for life after a mine closure.

Adding to the complexity will be the decisions workers make leading up to the mine closure, including whether to retire, stay in the industry or transition into another sector.

New Hope's 'Fit for Change' program is a blueprint any mine operator can implement to ensure its staff receive the emotional, mental and life skills they require to not only survive, but thrive following the closure of the mine.

The 'Fit for Change' program is effectively a cheat-sheet or step-by-step guide of what to do, including:

- The creation of a volunteer driven committee;
- A comprehensive survey to determine employee needs pre, during and post the mine closure;
- Identification and implementation of initiatives (with a focus on health and wellbeing);
- Regular staff updates;

- Tailored coaching;
- Access to subject matter experts for specific training, including:
 - Health
 - Attitude
 - Finance
 - Sleep
 - Relationships
 - Career

Alternatively, organisations can cherry-pick segments of New Hope's strategy to bolster their existing approach.

The 'Fit for Change' program also allows organisations undergoing change the ability to glimpse into the future and see the remarkable and potentially life changing benefits the program can have.

Investment:

New Hope allocates \$1,500 per person, per year to the 'Fit for Change' program.