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NEW SCULPTURE HONOURS VICTIMS OF APPIN DISASTER

A memorial sculpture honouring the 14 men who lost their lives in the 1979 Appin Mine disaster has been unveiled during a service of remembrance attended by members of the victims' families, former colleagues, community representatives and South32 employees.

South32 Illawarra Metallurgical Coal Vice President Operations Wayne Bull said the sculpture provides a place for quiet contemplation of the miners who lost their lives in the disaster.

"It is important we honour the memory of the 14 men who lost their lives in the Appin Mine disaster and acknowledge the deep and ongoing impact it had on their families, colleagues and the broader community," said Mr Bull.

"The commemorative sculpture has been created in consultation with the victims' families and provides space for contemplation and remembrance."

South32 employees laid a wreath during Friday's service of remembrance and the new sculpture was formally unveiled by South32 Appin Mine Rescue Team member John Nellestein and Frank Lauterbach, whose older brother Jurgen died in the tragedy.

Speaking at the event, Mr Lauterbach paid a moving tribute to his brother and thanked South32 for commissioning the "beautiful memorial sculpture" and highlighted the consultative creative process led by artist, Paul Johnson.

"Paul listened to our thoughts of how we wanted the miners to be remembered. We asked for a place of light, reflection and to be able to sit with family members. It's so wonderful to live in a community that honours their fallen even after 41 years," he said.

Located at Appin Sportsground, adjacent to the existing Appin Mine disaster memorial garden, the new sculpture was commissioned in 2019 as the community marked the 40th anniversary of the disaster.

It consists of 14 steel arches approximately three-metres in height. Each arch represents one of the miners and gently curve upwards and inwards to form a tunnel, reminiscent of a longwall mine tunnel.

The arches were made from local BlueScope Steel materials and each one has a solar-powered light at the tip, shining a narrow beam of light downwards, providing safety at night and creating a stepping-stone effect leading through the sculpture. Next to the lights, dichromatic coloured glass shards, enclosed in welded aluminium frames, reference miners' lamps.

The sculpture contains three hardwood seating areas, made by Appin Men's Shed, giving visitors space to sit and reflect. Some of the wood used for the seats has been taken from old mine support beams previously used in Appin mine. The exterior of the sculpture is a bespoke aluminium mesh design that references Appin's longwall mine plan.

Ends

About South32

South32 is a globally diversified mining and metals company. Our purpose is to make a difference by developing natural resources, improving people's lives now and for generations to come. We are trusted by our owners and partners to realise the potential of their resources. We produce bauxite, alumina, aluminium, energy and metallurgical coal, manganese, nickel, silver, lead and zinc at our operations in Australia, Southern Africa and South America. With a focus on growing our base metals exposure, we also have two development options in North America and several partnerships with junior explorers around the world.

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