



Kara Martin

We introduce new Out of the Pit board Member Kara Martin

So, when did you first become interested in mining?

I started becoming aware of mining as a TV journalist in Wollongong, south of Sydney. The local coal industry was a source for several stories. There was a great sense of tradition in the region, however, it was a little love-hate as the expansion of real estate, concern about coal trucks, and fear of subsidence meant there was growing public pressure on the industry to begin phasing out.

Why did you leave TV journalism?

I felt coerced by the News Editor to change what I was writing to suit the popular view and attract viewers. I didn't enjoy the sensationalism and compromise, and decided to resign.

What happened then?

I joined one of the coal mining companies, Kembla Coal & Coke (Rio Tinto), as a Communications Officer. It was a fun job, writing up the company's newsletter and publications. This meant that I went down the pit several times. In the early 90s this was sometimes a radical thing to do, with no women underground and many of the men considering female presence bad luck. I then moved into the human resources area.

You left that job?

Yes, my husband worked for BHP and received a transfer opportunity to the wire mill in Geelong. I managed to get a job with Rio's engineering company Minenco, running training programs. I enjoyed a brief stint there when I was asked to join the development team for Century Zinc. This was an exciting break to work as a business analyst as part of the marketing team.

I had the chance to travel, visiting smelters and negotiating contracts for material that had not even been dug out of the ground!

Sounds the dream job...

It was pretty fun, but then I discovered why I kept falling asleep at my desk. It wasn't jetlag, it was my future daughter Jaslyn draining my resources! I took maternity leave. While on leave, I had the chance to take up some consulting opportunities with Pacific Coal and Peak Gold.

Eventually I decided that mothering was much too important to do part-time and resigned from Rio. Since then, I have continued some consultancy opportunities that I could do from home.



You have also used the time as an opportunity to study?

Yes, I was involved in the start-up of Macquarie Christian Studies Institute at Macquarie University, and was given the chance to do some lecturing. I really enjoyed it, especially courses on Everyday Ethics and An Introduction to Christian Spirituality. I decided I would do a Master of Arts in Christian Studies. I have really enjoyed the study.

How did you hear about Out of the Pit?

I work two days a week at the Council of Private Higher Education, a lobby group, and a young man turned up to work in the office next to mine. That was Richard Fortune. He immediately gave me a brochure for the OOTP Conference! It was impossible not to be enthused by what Richard had to share.

Why did you want to join the Board?

My time with mining companies had shown me that the culture can be very alien for Christians. I never worked at FI/FO operations, but can imagine it would make Christians feel very isolated. I know that shiftwork alone can make it difficult for Christians to participate in the usual rhythms of church life, such as Bible study groups.

I had also developed some lectures in Work & Spirituality looking at ways we can integrate our faith with our work. I am interested in applying the concepts to mining and developing some resources for the website.

Eventually I would like to research and lecture in the area of practical theology, and that means I need the discipline of applying biblical principles to everyday life, including work. Out of the Pit will help make me accountable for that; and that involves engaging in an ongoing conversation about how to help Christians stay strong in making their faith work, and their work faithful.

Thanks Kara, I hope you have many of those conversations.