

### **It's a Big Family**

When you put 90 employees and management together on a project of the dimensions of the Bogong Power Station Development, you had better believe that the best way to get on is like a family.

Quite a few of the tunnelling crew have worked together on previous projects – and have now gathered here to work in this area. Many of the team have moved their families to the area and rented accommodation for the duration of the project. A couple of other staff have taken a shine to the valley and have already purchased property with the express view of staying on after the project is complete.

All of the team have been welcomed by the community and have been assimilating well, with several getting into the fishing, others involving themselves in the local sports clubs and many purchasing season tickets for the winter. Quite a few kids have been enrolled in the local schools. It has that family feel to it and, like any group; other traditional things start to happen.

Clint Helman is an Electrical Supervisor for McConnell Dowell on the AGL Hydro Bogong Power Station Development project.

Over the last couple of weeks he has been seen to be scheming. Planning and preparing for something – we know not what. He sought permission to bring his girlfriend of three years onto the site. This would appear to be OK – providing all the safety regulations are followed, but was there a specific reason? “Well yes” said Clint, “I have a question for her.”

At this stage the plans went into full swing. The ring was purchased, photographers lined up, the media contacted and colleagues were discreetly placed to witness the event. Project Superintendent John Wilson had to stand around looking useful, while pretending to talk on the mobile. Everyone of Clint's 40 work colleagues were hoping and praying that she said yes!

Clint arrived on site with Kirsty, all kitted out in regulation gear and hard hat, and as they walked over to the Main Headrace Access Tunnel, Clint said “this tunnel entrance is like our relationship, the start of what will be our life together.” With that Clint got down on one knee and presented Kirsty with the ring. Her answer was met with cheers from all the supposedly very busy workers all over the site. The cameras popped and as the happy couple made their way to the site office, the smiles on contentment were strikingly obvious.

Clint met Kirsty Harris at his 30th party in Broken Hill some four years ago. About 12 months later he asked her to the movies and they have been inseparable ever since. They plan to marry in a couple of years in Broken Hill among family and friends – then to start bringing a couple of little ‘Hellie’s’ into the world. When asked why he chose the tunnel entrance, Clint replied “Being away from her made me realise that I couldn't live without her and never wanted to lose her. Proposing at the start of the tunnel is significant to the start of our future life together.”

Kirsty and Clint, on behalf of all your workmates and the community, we wish you all the very best for a wonderful and prosperous life together.



**Caption:** *Kirsty Harris and Clint Helman 'seal' the proposal at power station construction site.*

*Picture – Kim Temple*



## THIS WEEK 5 It's a big family *The Tunnel Boring Machine*

BOGONG POWER STATION

### **The Tunnel Boring Machine**

While all this was going on, there is actually a major construction project underway. Approximately 134 metres of the Main Headrace Access Tunnel has been excavated to the point where the about 30 metres of solid rock has been drilled and blasted ready for the 200 plus tonne, 12 million dollar Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) 'Aurora Australis' to start its mammoth 18 month, 6.5 kilometre journey.

During the last week, the rails into the tunnel have been laid and the cutting head fitted to an assembly that will allow it to run along the rails, right up to its start position at the rock face. Inch by inch, the temporary hydraulic rams are slowly pushing the TBM forward. Working day and night, the guys monitor the progress, remove and re-attach the blocks and move forward steadily. Once at the face the cutting head will support itself with the help of 'gill' type grippers just behind the main bearing. Behind these are four solid rams that will be used to push the cutting head forward and behind these rams are the grippers that expand against the rock walls of the tunnel to secure the whole TBM while the rams drive the cutting head forward. At the full extension of the rams (about 2m) the gills come out and lock into the walls. The Grippers contract and the rams retract, dragging the rest of the TBM up to it. The Grippers lock in again, the gills contract and the rams push the cutting head forward again into the solid rock with a pressure of 2,200 tonnes. An example of the hardness of the rock is that solid concrete must have a hardness of 18 to 20 mpa. The rock the Aurora Australis will be working through is 200 mpa. The timing of the project is dependant upon the TBM cutting between 20 and 40 metres per 24 hour shift.

Visitors to Falls Creek will have noticed concrete barriers and new slabs being poured on the left (south eastern side) of the road at the entrance to the site, a couple of hundred metres above the entrance to Bogong Village. The rock from the tunnel will be 'conveyored' to this site for loading into trucks and transport to the holding points - the West Kiewa in winter and the Bogong High Plains in summer.

Overall, this \$123 million AGL Hydro project will be of major benefit to this community, tourism in the area and will supply another 140 megawatts of new renewable energy without using one extra drop of our precious resource than is currently being used.

Ken Bell

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