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FOREWORD

On behalf of the organising committee I welcome you to the 11th Underground Coal Operators' Conference (Coal 2011). This particular conference is held in the aftermath of difficult times of mine disaster and flooding.

Last year the tenth anniversary of the underground coal operators' conference was duly celebrated with various high quality presentations, high delegate participation, high sponsorship and exhibitions. It was the year that the world became to be accustomed to online availability of the past conference papers. Over the past 10 conferences a total of 332 papers were published in the proceedings, and almost all the papers were placed online <http://ro.uow.edu.au/coal/>.

Since then, from 130 countries there has been more than 85 000 downloads of papers. This is a reflection of the popularity of the conference. It is clear that the conference has gained standing worldwide, which is demonstrated by the number of overseas contributors. This conference will enrich the list online by another 51 papers.

Sincere thanks go to all the authors of the papers, in particular the authors who are regular contributors, not an easy task to achieve; to the participants who keep the conference going; and to our sponsors and exhibitors who contribute significantly towards keeping the conference alive and active.

It was agreed by the conference organisers and the Coal Operators' National Conference Committee that the conference title be changed to Coal Operators' Conference to embrace surface mining as well. This may add extra time pressure on the two day duration of the conference and this may lead to holding more concurrent sessions or to extending the conference to three days.

Special thanks to the conference organisers, paper reviewers, proceedings formatting individuals, the University of Wollongong printery and others who assisted in making this conference another successful event.

Naj Aziz
Conference chairman

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