

# Geologist

## Kirsten Aitken

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### What does a Geologist do?

Geologists conduct geological, geochemical and geophysical field surveys, collect samples, and run drilling programs to collect data. I also mentor graduates and vacation students, optimise coal recovery in the mine, and define the structure and health and safety risks associated with geology on site. We use the latest computer software to estimate probable resource locations.

### What do you work in and what is your specialty?

I work for BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), Australia's pre-eminent supplier of premium metallurgical coal to the global steel industry. BMA owns and manages seven mine sites in Central Queensland and a major coal loading port at Hay Point near Mackay. As a Senior Geologist at BMA's Blackwater Mine, one of the world's largest open cut coal operations, I work to optimise the efficiency of metallurgical and thermal coal recovery.

### How did you become interested in this area and when did you first start?

After attending a Careers Fair at UQ in my final year of study, I applied to the BHP Billiton Graduate Program. I was offered a place in the program six months prior to my graduation and when I commenced the two year graduate program, I worked at two of BMA's operations, Peak Downs Mine and Norwich Park Mine. After completing the program I was offered a full-time position at Blackwater Mine. My passion for my work was rewarded by my employer and I was promoted to the role of senior geologist.

### What study path have you taken to get here?

I studied a Bachelor of Science majoring in Geology and Geographic Information Systems at the University of Queensland. My qualifications helped me in this role due to the skills that I learnt both from a team work perspective but as well as technically based understanding of structure, quality, and report writing.

### What do you like most about your job?

Dealing with people is the most exciting part about my role, helping people understand geology and teaching them about it so they can see it as an actual entity. I enjoy the ability to grow and develop people who are keen to learn, and helping people understand geology is one of the most exciting parts of my role.

### What advice would you give to someone interested in working in this area?

The one thing that I have come to realise is how much networking and making friends helps you in the mining industry. Such a small community and so diverse, but everyone knows someone who knows you.