

# KEMIRA

## Diary of a Strike

In September 1982 the Australian steelworks BHP announced its intention to close down some of its coal mines in the Wollongong area just south of Sydney.

The worst affected was Kemira colliery where 300 workers were to lose their jobs. 20 days before the closure of the pit a group of 31 miners occupied the pit and established themselves 5 kilometres underground. The Womens Auxiliary took over one of the company buildings and organised a kitchen, while fellow miners, wives and supporters set up an embassy at the pit-top and kept vigil. Local union officials called a one-day general strike. Several hundred miners, steelworkers and their families took a train journey to Canberra, the national capital. On arrival, they stormed Parliament House bringing the issue to the attention of the whole nation. The strike focused the attention on the plight of the people of Wollongong, which was typical of other Australian cities profoundly affected by the economic recession.

The film captures these dramatic events and then proceeds to follow the fortunes of some of the miners and their families and the profound changes they experienced when the strike finally ended.

The film refers to wider historical processes and events and touches on the broader theses of worker relations in capitalist economies.

**KEMIRA – Diary of a Strike** premiered at the Sydney Film Festival and went on to win an AFI award for Best Documentary in 1984.

*"Kemira expresses opposition to the fracturing of the workplace, and the careless collusion of government and big business against unified workers. In this sense the film makes an important contribution to a generic collection of film about work in Australia."*

Rebecca Coyle and Lisa Milner, Metro Magazine 153

Length: 62 mins

More information and study guide available at [www.tomzubrycki.com](http://www.tomzubrycki.com)

Made in association with the Australian Film Commission

Tom Zubrycki  
Fabio Cavadini  
Russ Herman  
Gill Scrine

Producer/director:  
Cinematography:  
Sound Recordist:  
Editor:

A film by Tom Zubrycki.

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AFI Winner Best Documentary

*"Kemira – Diary of a Strike ranks as one of the best documentaries ever made in Australia. An exceptionally moving human document"*  
David Stratton, Sydney Morning Herald

