

Alan Roberts — 'Home' Again After Five Years

For the new General Manager — Operations at Cockle Creek, Alan Roberts, and his family, returning to Australia was 'coming home'.

Alan has just taken up his new position after nearly five years' secondment to AM&S in the United Kingdom.

And while both he and his wife, Janice, were born in the UK, they are naturalised Australians having first arrived in 1970. Their two children, Lucy sixteen, and Ben fifteen, were both born in Broken Hill where Alan worked with the Zinc Corporation when he came to Australia.

'So, it is really coming home for us after an enjoyable stay in the UK that was longer than anticipated,' Alan said.

Alan was seconded to AM&S in the UK in 1984 as Raw Materials Manager at the CSL Smelter in Avonmouth. In 1986 he was appointed General Manager at nearby Bristol Office and then in 1987 he returned to Avonmouth as General Manager — Production, a position he held until his appointment at Cockle Creek.

Like many people in the industry, Alan is no stranger to moving around. After six years as a metallurgist in Broken Hill he was seconded to Bolivia for fifteen months. In 1977 he returned to Australia where he was involved in the start-up and commissioning of the Woodlawn Mine. Here he became Manager — Metallurgy, a post he retained until his 1984 secondment to the UK.

Alan took up his appointment at Cockle Creek in mid August and has settled in well. He said the technology at Cockle Creek was 'surprisingly similar' to that at Avonmouth. The people, too, were similar.

'ISF people need to be special to handle the ups and downs of day to day operation. Through this they develop a grit and determination that is great to work with,' he said.

Alan continued, 'Following the campaign shutdown, Sulphide is well set up to achieve the increased targets that have been set for the smelter.'

'In today's very competitive world we must produce each tonne of metal for the least cost possible while ensuring the safety of our people, the integrity of our plant and the goodwill of the community.'

'This means that we must take every opportunity to increase our production. The first target is to break the

80,000 tonnes per annum furnace zinc barrier and thereafter introduce ways of increasing zinc output beyond the 90,000 tonnes a year mark.

'We are engaged in a costly program to restore the condition of our plant. This work must be done but it puts added pressure on other areas to keep costs down so that we can operate profitably. Similarly, the training program initiated by Peter Leane is designed to improve our skills and flexibility at work and thereby reduce our costs of production while making jobs more satisfying. I have a basic belief that a good operation is a clean and safe operation. Therefore, we will spend considerable time and effort improving our standards of housekeeping and safety awareness.'

'Sulphide has developed excellent relationships with the community in which we operate. With increasing public awareness it is essential that these relationships are fostered and maintained. Increasing environmental pressures will require us to improve the quality of all streams that leave our site.'

'All these improvements can be achieved but as someone said, "The only way to reach perfection is through change, assuming you're not already perfect." I look forward to sharing some of these changes so that Sulphide remains a strong and profitable operation of which we are proud.'

