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## **International Women's Day marks movement to increase gender diversity in resources**

AS tomorrow's International Women's Day (IWD) prepares to celebrate the economic, political and social importance of women right across the globe, a national movement is underway to increase gender diversity in the resource, allied and construction sectors.

The Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA) is ramping up its efforts to increase women's participation in one of Australia's most dynamic and evolving industries and provide employers with a key competitive advantage – strength through workforce diversity.

"IWD marks the perfect opportunity to launch the AWRA 'Way Forward' paper, which will raise awareness about the significant benefits to be derived from making our workforce more gender diverse," says Minna Knight, AWRA spokesperson and director of the Australian Mines and Metal Association (AMMA).

"We acknowledge there are certainly barriers to be overcome but the potential economic and productivity returns are significant. The Way Forward paper makes a powerful case for gender diversity to become a key strategic business goal.

"This paper is a call to action and outlines how we can facilitate the appropriate cultural change, promote best practice workplace policies and strengthen and unite the various women's networks and employers across Australia towards the goal of attracting and retaining more women in our workforce."

Through her involvement with AWRA at the national level and associated regional programs such as the Women in Mining Network (WIMnet), Brumby Resources CEO Alison Morley has already been helping facilitate a cultural shift that promises to strengthen the resource industry through workforce diversity.

"People are often surprised when they learn that along with being a mother of young children, I'm also the CEO of an ASX listed resource company. However my career is just one example of how conceptions and attitudes about women working in mining, oil and gas, and the allied sectors are evolving," Ms Morley says.

"Resource employers are recognising the benefit of employing more women to help address the industry's critical labour shortage. Given the heightened level of activity in our industry, it couldn't come too soon."

Various stakeholder networks have united under the AWRA banner with the goal of increasing the participation of women in the resource, allied and construction sectors from the current 16% to 25% by 2020. Senior executives from Australia's top resources companies have also embraced AWRA as an essential workforce development initiative.

Woodside Energy Ltd executive vice president, Australia business Lucio Della Martina believes the industry needs to work together to attract and retain more women.

"Women are an essential part of a highly engaged, skilled and motivated workforce. To harness this talent our industry must continue to develop flexible work practices, increase awareness about

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opportunities and promote successful women in our industry as role models for others," Mr Della Martina says.

A jointly-funded initiative by the Australian Government and industry, the AWRA project was created after increasing the attraction and retention of women employees was identified as a key strategy to filling skills shortages in Australia's burgeoning resource industry.

Coordinated by national resource industry employer group AMMA, the AWRA Reference Group comprises representatives from employer groups such as the MCA, QRC, CMEWA and AusIMM; companies such as Rio Tinto, Bechtel and Sodexo; as well as various Australian Government and academic representatives.

"Never before has there been a concerted and collaborative effort to achieve this level of workforce gender diversity across an entire industry. Led by a talented leadership committee, this national project thrives on the philosophy of cohesiveness, inclusiveness and innovation," Ms Knight says.

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