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Women in Resources Alliance workshop attracts top mining executives

KEY stakeholders from major resource companies, industry representative bodies and government departments are today meeting in a full-day intensive session aimed at increasing the participation of women in the resource industry.

The meeting of the Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA) leadership group is taking place at the AMMA 2012 National Conference in Perth, and all parties are stepping up the bid for greater attraction and retention of women.

“As the skills shortage continues to put pressure on employers, AWRA is one of the most important and exciting developments that is happening within our industry and the presence of a wide range key industry stakeholders today further confirms that,” says Minna Knight, AMMA Executive Director, Industry Services.

“There is an enormous opportunity to tackle the national labour and skills shortages and allow the projected investment in our industry to reach its potential – by tapping into an underutilised pool of skilled employees and building strength through workforce diversity.”

The AWRA project, which is partially funded by the Australian Government, has also secured the support of AMMA Board Director and Oz Minerals CEO Terry Burgess, who has signed on as the leader of the AWRA Industry Champions.

Mr Burgess' role will be to lead the industry by example and help and encourage fellow resource employers to implement the best practices and procedures to engage and retain talented women workers.

“There are great opportunities for women in our industry and definitely at OZ Minerals,” says My Burgess, who is well known among the industry for the importance he places on workforce diversity.

“Women remain underrepresented in our industry and increasing female representation is something OZ Minerals is focused on. We have formalised our commitment by setting measurable targets that we report externally against in our annual sustainability report.”

One of today's key agenda items is reviewing situational research led by Lindley Lord, director of Curtin University's Maureen Bickley Centre for Women in Leadership. The situational analysis details the practical and cultural reasons as the why the resource industry only has a 16% female participation rate in its national workforce.

“The AWRA Project has as one of its objectives the development of a data set that will help organisations determine the effectiveness of their initiatives to attract and retain more women,” Dr Lord says.

“The aim of this situational analysis is to highlight the data currently being collected and to identify gaps. This will enable a base line to be established against which progress of individual organisations and the sector compared to other major sectors in the Australian economy can be measured.”

MEDIA RELEASE

The AWRA project was launched in November 2011 and has since united other regional initiatives under a national banner. Today, the movement is designing practical tools to help employers break down cultural and operational barriers to women employees.

"The AWRA project now has the full support of the industry, but it's now appropriate that we step up this evolution of our workforce and start implementing real solutions at the coal face," AMMA's Ms Knight says.

"A major part of today focuses on 'engagement for change'. We are discussing the most effective ways to engage further with the industry, build on the current momentum and get the tools employers' need, particularly SME employers, to make a difference in this area.

"We have brought in a renowned specialist in influencing organisational culture, Anne Pattillo, to consultant and facilitate this session as AWRA seeks to break down cultural barriers to women's participation in the resource industry."

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