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'People' issues focus of Bunbury mining forum

BUNBURY is today playing host to a resource industry forum where West Australian mining professionals will discuss key workforce issues impacting projects and investment in the state's south-west.

Impending workplace policy reforms and the crippling skills shortage will lead discussion at the event, held each year in different regional cities across the state by resource industry employer group AMMA.

"The industry is facing some very serious workforce challenges in the near future including skills shortages, workplace relations matters and new developments in areas like work health and safety, FIFO practices and superannuation," said AMMA executive director industry Minna Knight.

"With more than \$135 billion worth of projects either committed or under construction in Western Australia and a further \$98 billion in the pipeline, there is no doubt the state's resource industry can lead the world for years to come.

"But this will only come to fruition if our resource employers can effectively manage a range of workforce and labour issues and minimise the adverse impacts of the severely deteriorating workplace relations environment.

"This meeting is all about discussing what's happening at a local level and how resource employers can prepare their workplaces to deliver the employment and economic benefits this heightened activity promises."

The progress of the federal government's inquiry into fly-in, fly-out workforce practices will be up for discussion as the industry continues to rely on FIFO workers to ease the pressure of skills shortages.

"Demand for skilled workers in the west is at an all time high, with 10,000 new jobs being created for West Australian people between February and May this year alone, and 50,000 new jobs forecasted by 2015," Ms Knight said.

"With unemployment in some regional towns like Bunbury above the state's average, improving FIFO practices is a win-win for employers and workers. AMMA's advice to the FIFO Inquiry is to support its use in the industry and ensure the state's projects get up and running and create even more jobs."

Ms Knight said many of the attendees will be there to hear about building skilled workforces by attracting more women to roles traditionally occupied by men – the primary goal of the Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA).

"As AWRA ramps up its efforts, more resource employers are asking how they can create greater gender diverse workforces," she said.

"Today's attendees will learn how they can embrace the AWRA initiative through best practice policies and appropriate cultural change that will promote the attraction and retention of more women at their worksites."

MEDIA: For further information or comments please contact AMMA media and communications officer Kylie Sully on 0409 781 580; kylie.sully@amma.org.au.