

Gladstone hosts mining workforce talks

GLADSTONE is today playing host to a resource industry forum where Central Queensland mining professionals will discuss key workforce issues impacting projects and investment in the sunshine state.

Workplace policy reform and skills shortages 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 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.

"Central Queensland is the heart of the state's \$160 billion resource industry, with record investment in major coal and gas projects poised to generate significant economic benefits for decades to come.

"The region's big three LNG projects under construction have a combined capital expenditure of almost \$50 billion and once in production will lead the state's economy for decades. Meanwhile, a strong pipeline of projects in the Galilee Basin will soon make it the biggest coal producing region in Australia.

"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.

"Employers are already experiencing the effects of a tightening labour market with increased competition driving up wages and staff turnover," Ms Knight said.

"As the industry prepares to create an additional 40,000 jobs by 2015, the pressure on employers to meet demands for skilled labour will only intensify. AMMA's advice to the FIFO Inquiry is to support its use in the industry and coordinate regional development to encourage greater localised workforces.

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).

"Currently women represent only 16% of the resource industry workforce. AWRA has set a goal to increase the number of women employed in resource roles to 20% by 2025," she said.

"Today's attendees will learn how they can create greater gender diverse workforces through best practice policies and appropriate cultural change to promote the attraction and retention more women at their worksites."

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