

Sale mining forum to focus on workforce issues

SALE is today playing host to a resource industry forum where Victorian mining professionals will discuss key workforce issues impacting projects and investment in the 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.

"While Western Australia and Queensland receive all the attention, there are also very significant oil and gas exploration projects occurring in the resources-rich Gippsland Basin off Victoria's eastern coast.

"The Kipper Tuna Turrum gas project alone will have a significant impact on the region with a total capital expenditure of \$4.4 billion and 3000 jobs during construction alone, placing it in the top 20 major resource projects in the country.

"But activity like 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 practices will be up for discussion as the industry continues to rely on the practice to meet its workforce needs.

"AMMA has called for greater state and government support of FIFO practices in the resource industry to ensure Victoria's pipeline of projects can be brought to life," Ms Knight said.

"Companies operating in the more remote areas of the country also rely heavily on workers who wish to maintain residence in Victoria while taking advantage of FIFO employment opportunities. It's important that sensible policy allow these arrangements to continue."

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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