

July 26, 2012

## Newcastle mining forum tackles 'people' issues

MINING professionals will meet in Newcastle today to discuss key workforce issues impacting projects and investment in the state.

Hosted by resource industry employer group AMMA, the forum will hone in on the concerns of local employers with workplace policy reform and skilled labour matters leading discussions.

"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.

"The coalfields in the Sydney-Gunnedah Basin comprise the largest thermal coal-producing region in Australia and planned expansions at the Port of Newcastle will see exports reach around 211 million tonnes by 2015.

"Furthermore, with energy and minerals projects either committed or under construction in New South Wales totalling almost \$6.4 billion in capital expenditure, the state's resource industry presents a strong future.

"But the employment and economic benefits from this growth will only be realised if resource employers can effectively manage a range of workforce issues."

Ms Knight said the progress of the federal government's inquiry into fly-in, fly-out practices and its review of workplace relations laws will be on the agenda as the industry aims to ensure workforce practices support the delivery of its major projects.

"The deteriorating workplace relations environment is a key issue that the industry cannot tackle without meaningful policy reform," she said.

"Similarly, with more projects entering the construction phases, the demand for skilled labour is at an all time high. AMMA's advice to the FIFO inquiry is to support the industry's use of FIFO practices as one solution to this workforce need.

"Many workers also choose the FIFO lifestyle as it allows them to maintain a residence in New South Wales while taking advantage of career opportunities in more remote areas of the country. It's important that sensible policies 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."

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