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Hobart hosts mining workforce talks

TASMANIAN mining professionals are gathering in Hobart 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 leading discussion.

"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.

"Tasmania has a rich history of mining which continues to be a significant driver of the state's economy, accounting for more than half of all export income, totalling more than \$1.7 billion.

"For instance, the Savage River iron ore mine has contributed to Tasmania's economy for more than 40 years, has a workforce of 600 and will continue to underpin the state's growth for many years to come.

"And with mineral-rich regions such as the west coast attracting record levels of exploration activity, future generations of Tasmanians can look forward to employment opportunities being created by the state's growing resource industry.

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

Ms Knight said 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 FIFO workers to ease the pressure of skills shortages.

"With unemployment in Tasmania above the national 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 as one solution to this workforce need.

"Many workers also choose the FIFO lifestyle as it allows them to maintain a residence in Tasmania while taking advantage of career opportunities in remote areas of the mainland. It's important that sensible policy allow these arrangements to continue."

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," Ms Knight 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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