

Women in oil and gas on the rise

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THE number of female oil and gas workers has risen across the globe in recent years but women still lag far behind their male counterparts, according to a report by BP and Rigzone.

The *Global Diversity and Inclusion Report* surveyed 3000 oil and gas professionals from around the world to explore female representation in the energy workplace, 90 per cent of whom were male.

According to 72 per cent of respondents, oil and gas was still a male-dominated industry, and more than half agreed it was important to make the industry attractive to women.

Australian Mines and Metals Association executive director Tara Diamond said the Australian industry was improving but still needed work.

“Any perception that the resource industry is a ‘boys club’ has certainly been eroded over the past decade or so, however we cannot ignore that a major barrier for women’s entry into our sector remains the male-dominated workforce culture,” she said.

The report stated that 60 per cent of respondents expected the highest increase of women in oil and gas would be at entry level.

“While the industry acknowledges it still has work to do in terms of a gender balanced pool of talent, the results of this survey demonstrate that industry initiatives and programs to engage women about careers in oil and gas are making an impact and we need to keep focussed for them to continue to do so,” BP group head of organisational effectiveness Kirsty Bashforth said.

Globally, 54 per cent of respondents said women had equal opportunities for advancement to management positions within the industry.



A recent report by BP and Rigzone revealed that although the number of female oil and gas workers had risen, it still had a way to go
Photo - Australian Mines and Metals Association

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"The survey finding that attitudes and opportunities for women workers in the oil and gas industry are improving certainly reflect what is happening here in Australia," Ms Diamond said.

"The Australian resource industry realises that workforce gender diversity is not just a 'nice to have' but a 'must have'."

While the number of women in the industry has grown, it has been a slow process, according to Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA (CMEWA) senior policy advisor people strategies Susan Cull.

"Over the last 10 years it has been a slow change, nothing dramatic, but over the last

couple of years the figures (for WA) have hovered around 19 to 20 per cent," she said.

"We haven't seen any significant growth over the last couple of years, particularly in resources."

According to the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, women represented 15.5 per cent in the resources industry compared with 46 per cent in other industries. Only 2.3 per cent of oil and gas workers were women.

The most recent CMEWA *Diversity in the WA Resources Sector* survey revealed that women were still underrepresented in a number of jobs, including engineering, but the majority of women in the industry workforce were in professional and administrative roles.

"It is not at all unusual to see women working on mine sites or in construction-based roles in any remote part of the country, however female representation in what we call 'non-traditional women's roles' is still an area that requires significant attention," Ms Diamond said.

Australian companies have begun reshaping marketing and advertising to demonstrate gender inclusiveness, set recruitment targets, conduct pay audits to determine inequality, and restructure roles to fit flexible work arrangements, Mrs Cull said.

Companies such as Woodside and Chevron have introduced initiatives to increase workplace diversity, such as flexible working hours and the Women

in Engineering program.

A number of organisations have also been developed to boost the presence of women in the industry, such as the Australian Women in Resources Alliance and the Perth-based Women in Oil and Gas network.

Ms Diamond said the resources industry was going through a transitional phase where construction would make way for a prolonged period of operational and production activity, which would require more than 30,000 new workers.

"Australia's next phase of resources activity will be defined by innovation, operational excellence and record commodity and energy exports – women have a very important role to play here," she said.