



People resourcing for an operational future

Bluestone Tin has invested in permanent trainers to excel their Renison Bell workforce. Image courtesy of Bluestone Tin

As many of Australia's new mega resource projects move into production, fresh skills challenges across the mining, oil and gas sector are emerging for the near future. The industry's 'people experts', the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA), is working to ease the transition, and its Training and Development Director, Janine Temple, says workforce planning is key.

After a decade of record investment in Australia's resource industry, the transition into a long-term production phase is creating unprecedented demand for increased technical skills across the nation.

Already, skills sets common to the resource industry are evolving, with immense growth in the liquid natural gas (LNG) sector demanding proficiencies that greatly differ from those in minerals mining. The Australian Workplace Productivity Agency, for instance, predicts that LNG operational roles will increase by more than 22,000 in the coming five years.

While renowned for its policy work to help stimulate further investment and employment growth, national resource employer group AMMA is also working to help its members upskill their existing workforces to be ready for the transition.

'Recruiting new highly skilled individuals into Australia's resources industry is more important than ever; but with 260,000 people already



AMMA Training and Development Director
Janine Temple



The burgeoning LNG industry is adding new pressure to skills demands

employed and contributing positively to our sector, it is also critical to take advantage of our existing talent pool,' says Janine Temple, Director of AMMA's Training and Development division.

'In increasing frequency, we see resource employers moulding new strategies in workforce planning that commit to 'upskilling their employees and guiding them into leadership positions to build on an established workforce.

'The success we are seeing shows that workforce expansion through external hiring procedures must be complemented and supported by sophisticated internal training and development strategies.'

The greater trend toward internal training and development was also highlighted in the Productivity Agency's report, showing that resource employers spend upwards of \$1.1 billion annually on training, just two per cent of which is

funded by government subsidies.

'Faced with strong competition for talent across many industries, resource employers now recognise the need to develop effective training and development strategies that meet their organisational objectives and improve their competitive position, both commercially and in their people,' Temple says.

Temple explains that as a registered training organisation (RTO), AMMA's nationally recognised credentials are often called upon to help resource companies become an 'employer of choice'.

New South Wales mining and exploration group Perilya is one such employer that utilised AMMA's RTO to inspire their employees along a meaningful career path and help them to reach their potential.

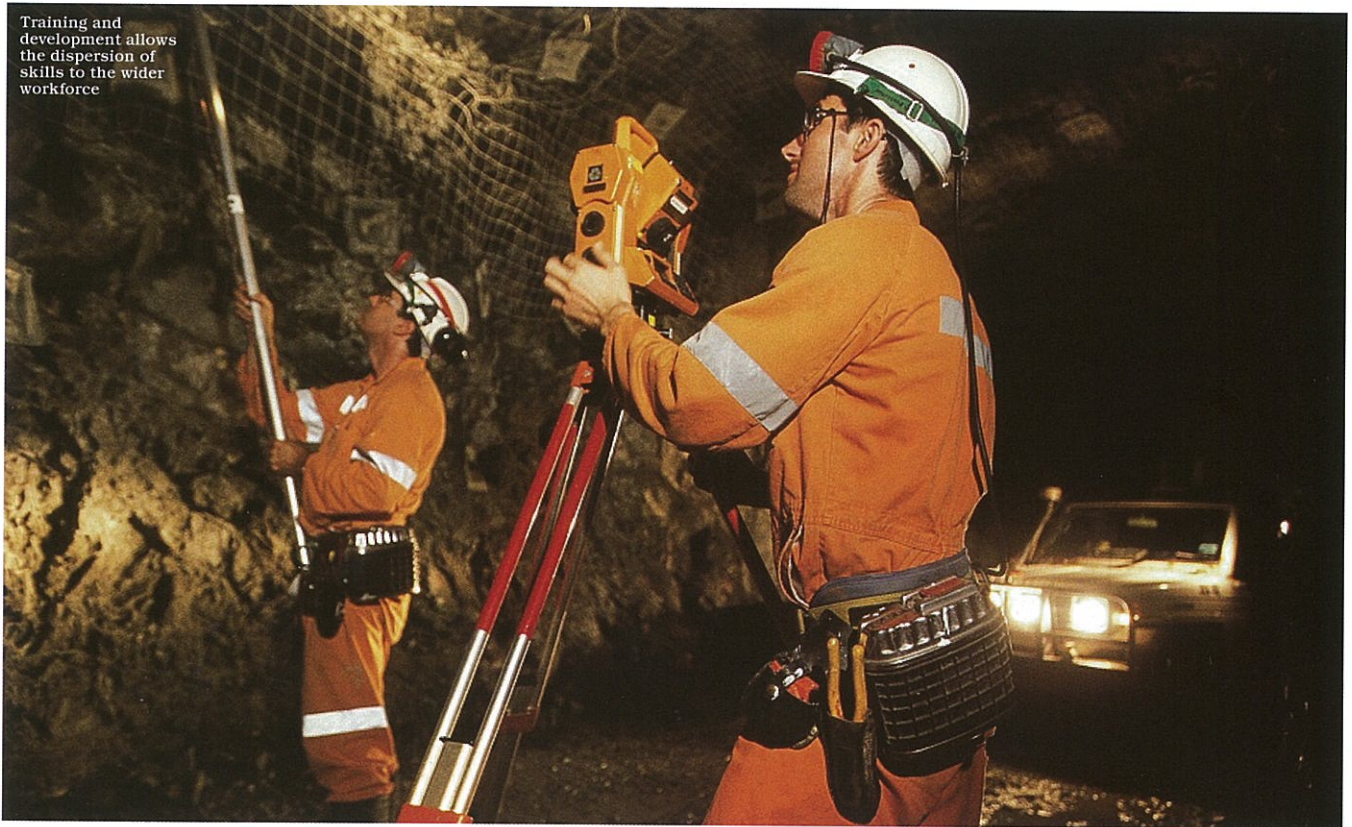
Specifically, Perilya's high-performing

workers were identified and offered a Certificate III in Underground Metalliferous Mining and a Certificate III in Resource Processing. In addition, the company also had a Diploma of Management course tailored by AMMA for its specific operational needs.

AMMA's trainer for the project, Craig Gilvarry, says that Perilya's strategy has assisted the organisation to be better prepared for its future skills needs.

'Perilya understands that it is not just the technical skills that are important in our industry, but also the ability for supervisors to effectively lead their teams and ensure that desired outcomes are met. This is why the company's strategy has been to combine technical skills certifications with front-line management training,' Gilvarry says.

'In an industry that relies on 24-hour operation, this partnership has allowed the company to streamline the training



Training and development allows the dispersion of skills to the wider workforce

process and ensure that they have control over when, where and how their training is delivered.'

AMMA has also been working with Tasmanian tin miner Bluestone Mines to take its workforce planning to the next level. The operator of the Renison Bell tin mine has invested in developing a dedicated team of trainers for its growing workforce.

For Gilvarry, this was a matter of 'training the trainers'.

'This strategy saw four of the star pupils in Bluestone's Certificate III in Resource Processing training course then offered the opportunity to take up a second qualification – a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment,' he says.

'Such a move reflects a growing trend among employers committed to the dispersion of knowledge and skills across their workforces. Experienced, dedicated staff are an organisation's greatest asset, and are inevitably relied upon to act as leaders in the workforce, so it makes sense to get them qualified to train and assess.

'Employers enjoy the added convenience of a dedicated training resource that is able to respond to variable project needs in a timely manner and, as in the case of Bluestone Tin, ensure that employees meet the latest process and safety standards.

'Needless to say, once employees are qualified, their value to the organisation increases dramatically.'


Of course, Temple adds, this philosophy is widespread, and resource employers are quickly learning the benefits of a qualified workforce, including higher retention rates among employees, a stronger workforce culture, and greater productivity in the workplace.

'Organisations have so much to gain from workforce training and development, but a key component of those gains is the relevance of the courses on offer,' Temple says.

'With AMMA's members operating in some of Australia's most remote locations, providing flexible and mobile training opportunities is crucial in the resource industry, underscoring the development of short half-day to full

five-day courses that can be delivered on-site, off-site, via distance education, or online.

'However, it's our capacity to customise courses to reflect an organisation's core objectives that sets AMMA apart, whether this is delivered as nationally accredited training as an RTO, or crafting unique operational certification to meet the needs of specific employers.'

Adapting to an evolving skills market is a key component in the workforce strategies of leading resource organisations, and advanced internal training and development is fast succeeding traditional external recruitment methods to meet growing skills demands. With the assistance of providers like AMMA Training and Development, employers across the country are doing their part to resource the current workforce for an operational future. 

Please note: The Australian Mines and Metals Association is an independent body that has no affiliation with One Key Resources.