



SKILLING

The Future of Training in Resources

New skills challenges are emerging across the resource industry as new mega projects make the transition from construction to production in increasing numbers. **Janine Temple** from national resource employer group, the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA), says skills development is gaining momentum.

On the back of more than two decades of record resource investment, some of Australia's most significant resource projects are now making the shift from the labour-intensive construction phase into long-term production.

Economically, this is an important era for Australia. The Bureau of Resource and Energy Economics (BREE) has predicted a surge of 2.6% in resource exports to reach \$201 billion in 2014-15, contributing substantially to the country's gross domestic product and continuing to prop up the national economy.

The changing resource landscape is however, also evolving the national skills demands at a rapid pace.

In the burgeoning LNG sector, demand is growing for skills proficiencies that are unlike those traditionally required for mineral mining, while technical skills are also needed to manage the operational phase of many major projects.

The Australian Workplace Productivity Agency (AWPA) has forecast that without further investment, construction-based skills demands would fall from a current peak of 83,324 to 7,708 by 2018. Likewise, operation-based skills in oil and gas would increase by

57% to 61,212 over the coming five years.

However, underpinning the resource industry's current 260,000-plus workforce is an established history of innovation when it comes to combatting skills shortages, and promising new trends toward workforce development are emerging nation-wide.

A NEW APPROACH TO TALENT RESOURCES

AMMA's training director, Janine Temple, says up-skilling is taking a leading role in meeting emerging skills shortages.

"Resource employers remain committed



to recruiting new highly-skilled talent into Australia's mining, oil and gas sectors, but the existing resource workforce is also gaining recognition as a valuable and prolific source of skills," Ms Temple says.

"In growing numbers, resource employers are embracing up-skilling as a strategic approach to workforce planning that builds on employee commitment and experience to meet skills gaps as they emerge."

The data backs Ms Temple's assertions. According to the AWP, resource employers spend upwards of \$1.1 billion annually on training, just 2% of which is funded by government subsidies. Coincidentally, success stories attributed to such expenditure can be found across the country.

Western Australian mining and exploration group Perilya has infused its workforce culture to reflect career progression, building on its existing skills base with training that encourages each and every

employee to stay the path to improvement. Tailored by the AMMA RTO, Perilya offered a trio of courses to its star performers, including a Certificate III in Underground Metalliferous Mining, a Certificate III in Resource Processing and a Diploma of Management designed specifically to meet the organisation's operational needs.

Tasked with delivering the customised up-skilling opportunity, AMMA training consultant Craig Gilvarry says leadership training like Perilya's Diploma of Management is commonly recognised as key to a positive and productive workplace.

"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 desired outcomes are met," Mr Gilvarry says.

"This is why the company's strategy has been to combine technical skills certifications with frontline management training." →

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Report



JOB TRENDS STATE BY STATE

Queensland mine owners are reducing the number of FIFO workers on the payroll and are instead focusing on job candidates prepared to relocate to rural and remote locations, according to the latest *Hays Quarterly Job Hotspot Report* (July-September 2014).

According to the report, "They are focusing on local candidates and the number of FIFO roles has reduced. FIFO mines are instead only making key replacements as opposed to creating new roles. Residential remote mines are still looking for quality residential workers in various positions and if candidates are prepared to relocate then remote positions are available."

The report also claims that Western Australia's market is candidate rich, "but this has been nicely balanced by a healthy flow of work across all areas of mining. There is certainly more positivity from employers in relation to the next few months. At this stage employers are still focused on temporary assignments, but with new financial year budgets we may see an increase in permanent vacancy activity."

Redundancies and mine closures in South Australia have "seen a number of quality candidates enter the jobs market. While employers are not hiring permanent staff, they are employing contractors to help with peak workloads."

In the Northern Territory, "the workforce remains stable. There are still opportunities, but candidates based in Darwin are preferred. Salaries and pay rates remain steady, as do hiring intentions. Interstate candidates are not considered due to the rosters on offer. Any interstate candidate interested in vacancies in the Northern Territory needs to make their own way to Darwin at their own expense."

In Victoria "the resources market is starting to see an increase in work and the return of positivity, with roles across various segments of the industry. The focus remains on contract staff, and employers are recruiting both long and short-term assignments."

To read the full report visit www.hays.com.au/report



ACCESSING SKILLS FROM THE INSIDE

Outsourcing training partnerships to deliver such training is also a popular trend among employers, recognised as a cost-effective initiative that allows an on-demand approach to filling skills needs.

"In an industry that relies on 24-hour operation, this partnership with the AMMA RTO has allowed the company to streamline the training process and ensure they have control over when, where and how their training is delivered," Mr Gilvarry says.

Others, however, are taking to workforce development with a more long-term approach, as in the case of Tasmanian tin miner Bluestone Tin.

Selecting its four best graduates from a Certificate III in Resource Processing, Bluestone Tin engaged AMMA Training & Development to also deliver a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, laying the groundwork for a training division of its very own.

Having worked with Bluestone Tin's Renison workforce, Mr Gilvarry says 'training the trainer' is no longer a rare experience, with employers continuing to invest in their own training teams to up-skill and empower their workers.

"Qualifying employees in a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment reflects a growing trend among employers committed to the dispersion of knowledge and skills across their workforces," Mr Gilvarry says.

"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 which is able to respond to variable project needs in a timely manner and, as in the case of Bluestone Tin, ensure employees meet the latest process and safety standards.

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

FINE TUNING WORKFORCE PRACTICE WITH TRAINING

In addition to meeting new skills demands with workforce development, resource employers are also benefiting from training for their more traditional workplace requirements, including human resource management, workplace relations and occupational health and safety (OHS).

Mr Gilvarry, whose field of specialist expertise extends to workplace health and safety training, believes even the most stringent safety standards on-site pale in comparison to the benefits of an OHS-focused workforce. Upholding the importance of 'safety culture' in the mining, oil and gas sectors, AMMA recently introduced its own suite of nationally recognised qualifications to raise the bar on worksite safety and West Australian gold miner La Mancha can attest to its success.

Committing to business expansion underpinned by workforce development, La Mancha appointed AMMA's training team to help its people gain certifications in OHS, as well as frontline management and project management.



“To recognise employees’ existing skills through nationally recognised training not only reinforces engagement, but encourages career progression...”

Reviewing his time with La Mancha, Mr Gilvarry says the proficiencies gained through workforce training comprised just one component of improvement for the company.

“To recognise employees’ existing skills through nationally recognised training not only reinforces engagement, but encourages career progression, builds on internal capability and sets a company up for growth,” Mr Gilvarry says.

“La Mancha already had a strong workforce that was highly engaged with the company’s culture, which is a big plus from a trainer’s perspective.

“Nonetheless, significant changes to project operations and developments meant La Mancha needed to prepare its workforce accordingly.

“Enhancing leadership and project management skills, as well as equipping more people with work health and safety qualifications provides a solid foundation for organisational growth.”

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF UP-SKILLING

Looking back to the national spectrum, Ms Temple says growth is a constant among those who choose to invest in workforce training and development, as well as higher employee retention rates, stronger workforce cultures and greater workplace productivity.

However, she also notes that training the resource workforce isn’t without its challenges.

“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,” she says.

“More than 95 years’ experience with resource employers has taught us that every workplace across the mining, oil and gas sectors is unique, underpinning our philosophy that every course delivered must reflect that uniqueness.

“Whether delivered as nationally-accredited training or as a crafted operational certification, courses must be customised to reflect an organisation’s core objectives, positioning pupils to contribute their skill sets to the specific needs of their employer.”

Up-skilling the resource workforce also presents logistical challenges for trainers – challenges that require innovation to overcome.

“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,” Ms Temple notes.

THE FUTURE FORECAST

According to BREE, the transition of \$56 billion worth of major projects from construction into production over the past 12 months is a telling sign of a new and challenging resource industry environment, and emerging skills shortages are predicted in the near future.

As the labour market evolves, however, resource employers are committing to creative strategies that tackle skills challenges head on, making workforce training and development a top priority across the industry.

Profile



JANINE TEMPLE

Director Training and Development, CEO AMMA RTO

Janine Temple is the Director of Training and Development at national resource employer group, the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA). In this role Janine provides strategic planning and business advice for improved operations which are directed toward taking the organisation to the next level.

Janine has over 15 years experience in senior management roles including; national business development manager for a major professional services association; general manager for a leading Australasia wholesaling and consultancy organisation; and general manager for leading peak Industry body.

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