



Men's mining monopoly at an end as call goes out to women

VERITY EDWARDS

A RESOURCES employer group is leading the charge to boost women's employment in mining to 25 per cent by 2020.

The Australian Mines and Metals Association, through its gender-diversity body Australian Women in Resources Alliance, has tackled the gender gap in one of the nation's most male-dominated industries, getting the message out that mining companies don't just want men.

AMMA executive director Tara Diamond said female participation in the industry was about 15 per cent, with most of those jobs in human resources or administration rather than on-site. That figure fell slightly in the third quarter of this year, the first decline in five years.

However, Ms Diamond said

the 25 per cent target was achievable because companies were committed to making positions more flexible, increasing pay equity and encouraging women to work in on-site roles.

"Traditionally it's been a closed shop and to get a job you had to know a bloke who knew a bloke," she said.

"There's also the male-dominated image but we're going into communities and saying we want you regardless of experience."

By recruiting for a particular role and considering company values, ethics and other skills, Ms Diamond said companies were training people who were the right fit for jobs. That meant better retention rates and more women taking up fly-in, fly-out positions.

So far mining giant BHP Billiton, heavy equipment manufacturer Caterpillar and maritime

resources company Farstad Shipping have joined a pilot program to lift women's participation.

Shipping also is a male-dominated industry, and Farstad managing director Wayne Aitken said his company was trying to increase its female participation rate from below 3 per cent.

"We've set up a gender diversity committee and determined targets that we need to achieve," he said. "We have quite a strong diversity onshore; what we're trying to encourage is offshore, and part of that is going to the Australian Maritime College and through cadets."

He said the industry had to promote its family-friendly practices such as working five weeks on and five weeks off, the fact shipping work was financially lucrative, and that most workers accrued almost a month of extra leave each year.