

MEDIA RELEASE

14 October 2015

Industry welcomes sensible response to WA FIFO inquiry

(AMMA – Australian Mines and Metals Association)

THE Western Australian Government has provided a sensible and constructive response to a parliamentary inquiry into the mental health impacts of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) working arrangements, acknowledging that greater evidence is needed to support workplace initiatives, says the peak body representing resource industry employers, AMMA.

In its response to the inquiry's 30 recommendations, the government acknowledged a proposal to establish a code of practice for mental health, but preferred the approach of strengthening existing codes of practice and conducting further research.

"AMMA welcomes the sensible manner in which the WA Government has responded to this sensitive inquiry," says AMMA executive director – policy and public affairs, Scott Barklamb.

"The government has rightly recognised that mental health challenges exist across all industries and communities, and that a higher level of understanding is needed to address this complex issue at the societal level.

"The development of a system to record and monitor deaths by suicide across different occupational groups is also a practical first step towards building this evidence base.

"The government's approach is set to make a real difference to mental health outcomes and to meeting an important challenge to the resource industry and all who work in it."

Mr Barklamb says the resource industry continues to invest in best-practice programs and services to support employee mental wellbeing in an ongoing commitment to the health and safety of its workforce.

"Well prior to the inquiry, AMMA initiated a resource industry mental health working group, providing a forum for resource executives to openly discuss mental health challenges and exchange leading organisational practices and initiatives," he adds.

"Mindful that the highest risk group for suicide - men between the ages of 15 and 44 - comprise a large proportion of the FIFO workforce, resource employers have been on the front foot in partnering with key mental health initiatives such as *beyondblue* and R U OK? to both build awareness and offer real support in the workplace.

"Today there are many innovative and successful initiatives such as Sodexo Australia's 'I Hear You' program, which is encouraging open and frank conversation about mental health at work and creating a supportive environment for employees to receive help."

Following this inquiry's sole focus on FIFO and the mining industry, Mr Barklamb hopes the government will now work to elevate awareness of mental health challenges across all workplaces and across the WA community.

"We hope this inquiry has gone some way to reducing stigma on mental health, and that the government engages with the resource industry to further understand, build upon and promote best practice mental health initiatives," he concludes.

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