



## JOBS SURGE

# Miners call for help with skills deficit

**Dana McCauley**

The mining industry's peak body has predicted 20,767 more workers will be needed in the next five years and called on government and business to "learn our lessons from the past" to prevent a skills shortage.

A report by the Australian Resources and Energy Group AMMA says action is needed to avoid a repeat of challenges faced during the mining boom, when employers were forced to offer high salaries and generous benefits as they struggled to lure workers.

"We must learn our lessons from the past and be better at industry workforce planning, nurturing the skills pipeline, facilitating inter-sector labour mobility, and avoiding projects cannibalising each other for critical trades and semi-skilled roles," the report, released today, says.

The new jobs expected to be created by 2024 include 8660 mining plant operators; 2847 heavy diesel fitters; 4110 supervisors and other white-collar roles; 4180 engineers, technicians, geologists and related roles and 970 other trades, such as electrical, mechanical and maintenance workers.

The forecast draws on official data relating to the 57 mining projects - worth about \$41 billion - in the "committed" or "likely to proceed" phases, and takes into account the impact of automation and expected mine closures.

It includes 5714 mining jobs in Queensland, where the issue of coal mining jobs was pivotal at the May federal election, but attributes only 800 to the Adani mine.

Coal mines make up nine of the 57 projects nationally (16 per cent), seven of which are either thermal coal or a mix of thermal and coking.

AMMA chief executive Steve

Knott said Australia's mining industry was "facing new workforce demand at levels not seen since the previous ... 'boom'."

"While demand across the next four years will be far steadier than the unprecedented growth we saw in 2005-12, it is clear that securing the pipeline of skills to support mining project growth to 2024 will be a significant challenge," he said. "We must avoid a scenario where nationally significant mining projects are delayed by skills shortages, or competing for engineers,

trades and skilled operators with the \$100 billion worth of infrastructure projects in Australia's development pipeline."

Employment and Skills Minister Michaelia Cash said the Morrison government was "acutely aware of the workforce requirements in the Australian economy" and was addressing them through "major reforms" to the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

The government committed \$535 million in the federal budget to overhaul the VET system, in-

cluding a regional apprenticeship wage subsidy trial and a review of the National Skills Needs List.

Senator Cash said while the Coalition was responding to "structural issues" within the VET system, business needed to play its part. She said: "Workforce planning is not simply a problem for government."

The government is also reviewing the skilled migrant visa list.

## 20,767

Total workers estimated to be needed in the mining industry by 2024.