



# Skills crunch fears rising

## STUART MCKINNON

WA's rebounding mining sector will need at least an extra 10,679 workers by 2024, adding to fears of a looming skills shortage, according to the Australian Mines and Metals Association.

The resources and energy employer group said its conservative estimate was based on 30 new mining projects entering production in the next four years and did not include the construction jobs needed to build the mines.

The WA jobs represented more than half the 20,767 new mining workers that would be needed nationally over the same period.

The estimated growth would lift the number of people directly employed in the WA mining sector from 105,300 in May this year to 116,000 in 2024, representing the biggest number since the 119,800 workers engaged at the peak of the last mining boom in mid-2012.

Seven big iron ore projects in the Pilbara by the mining majors account for more than half the workers needed, but lithium and gold also feature

prominently, with eight and five projects respectively.

Workers including mine plant operators, mining engineers, geologists and heavy diesel fitters will be required along with other trades such as electricians and people with management, administrative and technical skills.

AMMA chief executive Steve Knott said the industry was facing new workforce demands at levels not seen since the last mining boom (2007-2013) but he predicted it would be a far steadier growth.

The association also noted

there were another 49 "possible" projects in WA in the feasibility stage, which had not been included in its forecasts.

If those projects were approved for development, AMMA's forecasts could be "significantly" exceeded.

"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," Mr Knott said.

In March, the WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy estimated about 15,000 additional workers would be required in the WA resources sector between 2020 and 2025, compared with the 40,000 needed in the previous mining boom between 2005 and 2012.

However, CCIWA chief executive Paul Everingham said there were still concerns about skills shortages, partly because parents had dissuaded their children from pursuing mining-related courses, by telling them there were no jobs in the sector.



## WORKERS WANTED

- **4464** - mining plant operators
- **2138** - mining engineers, geologists, technical staff
- **2130** - supervisors, managers, administrators
- **1486** - heavy diesel fitters
- **461** - other trades (electrical, mechanical, maintenance)

