



Gender diversity is ‘mission critical’, mining boss declares

WORKPLACE

Nick Toscano

BHP chief executive Mike Henry says the mining giant has made significant advances in its push to break the industry’s acute workforce gender imbalance, lifting the number of women it has hired or promoted.

The nation’s largest miner set an industry-leading goal four years ago to improve diversity and achieve gender balance across its 30,000-strong direct workforce by 2025. Company statistics reveal female representation increased by 2 percentage points in 2019-20 and has now hit a new high of 26.5 per cent.

The increase, up from 17 per cent when BHP set the target, was described as “good progress” and reflects a sizeable shift in the context of the Australia’s mining industry, which has been trying to shake its image of being a “boys’ club”, but consistently ranks as the most male-dominated workforce in the country.

“An inclusive culture and diverse workforce is mission critical for BHP,” Mr Henry said. “That means a shift in culture to one that is more inclusive, where it is safe to speak up, where ideas get heard and where people feel like they can contribute at their full capacity and can develop themselves. Part of enabling that is through ensuring that we have a workforce that is balanced.”

More than 60 per cent of BHP’s new hires over 2019-20 were women, compared to 10.4 per cent five years ago when the company first embarked on the gender-diversity drive which has focused on embedding flexible working conditions and uncovering and taking steps to mitigate potential bias in its behaviours, systems and processes.

Women in BHP’s leadership roles grew 1.7 percentage points year-on-

year and now account for more than 22 per cent of leadership roles.

“Getting this right will be a serious competitive advantage for BHP,” Mr Henry said.

The figures show BHP is tracking behind its target of 3 per cent growth in female representation a year, the pace of change it says is required in order to achieve its diversity ambitions by 2025.

New data from the federal government’s Workplace Gender Equality Agency show gender di-

versity in mining rose 1 per cent in 2019-20, which employer group the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) said was a “slower than preferred” rate of growth.

The association said many resources and energy sector employers had introduced policies to attract more women to the sector, including expanded paid parental leave, redesigning jobs, and initiatives to advance more women into leadership positions.

MINING STILL A BOYZONE

Female workforce representation 2019-20

