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## 'Cover-up culture' at mines

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Unions are calling for the establishment of an independent body to investigate claims of sexual abuse and harassment at WA mine sites.

But the mining lobby has rejected "absurd" suggestions poor behaviour has been accepted and enabled by industry leaders.

A survey conducted by the West Australian Mineworkers Alliance has found almost one in four women in WA mining have experienced sexual assault at work.

About 20 per cent of respondents said they had been offered career advancement in exchange for

sexual favours, while two-thirds had experienced verbal sexual harassment. Many said they were wary of raising complaints with their managers.

The alliance, led by the Australian Workers Union and CFMEU, says an independent oversight body is "urgently needed" so workers can raise complaints without fear of retaliation or blacklisting.

"While it's shocking that so many workers have been sexually abused at mine sites, what's more shocking still is the mine management culture of cover-up and

victim punishment," AWU national secretary Daniel Walton said yesterday.

"Any victim of workplace sexual harassment or abuse should feel safe and protected when coming forward to their employer. That's just clearly not the case at WA mines."

A report by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins last year found 40 per cent of mining workers had experienced sexual harassment at work. Women were twice as likely to be harassed than their male colleagues.

Industry group Australian

Mines and Metals Association yesterday said more needed to be done

to stamp out workplace sexual harassment within the resources and energy sector.

But chief executive Steve Knott hit back at cover-up claims, saying national data suggested mining employees were more likely to report incidents of workplace sexual harassment than those in other industries.

"The industry is awash with outstanding leaders, many who have taken a personal stand on this issue for decades and would find it highly offensive to be accused of

covering up workplace sexual harassment," Mr Knott said.

"This rhetoric, which is not based on fact or supported by independently gathered data, is not helpful to the common goal of working together to build a culture where sexual harassment cannot exist."

Several women have come forward to police in recent months detailing claims of sexual assaults at major WA mines.

A State parliamentary inquiry has since been launched into the sexual harassment of women in the WA mining industry.