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## Worker shortage threatens resources

West Australian, Perth

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### **STUART MCKINNON**

A national resources employer group has warned existing operations across WA's booming but understaffed resources sector could be under threat because of a looming worker shortage.

The Australian Resources and Energy Employer Association has estimated WA will need an extra 11,250 workers in the industry by the end of 2027.

The figure, contained in AREEA's Resources and Energy Workforce Forecast, represents nearly half the 24,000 additional workers needed nationally by the sector in five years time.

The report broke down the estimated labour required to operate new, expanded and restarted mining and oil and gas projects expected to enter production by December 2027.

It found WA had 57 of 107 projects nationally that were either committed or advanced in feasibility and considered likely to proceed within the five-year pe-

riod.

AREEA chief executive Steve Knott said with the WA resources sector already facing significant skills shortages, it would struggle to fill the vacancies without creative solutions from industry and government.

"While we will always celebrate the strength of the industry and the jobs and other benefits that come with increased project investment, our industry is battling the worst skills crisis in a generation," he said.

"This is threatening the continuity of existing operations, resulting in temporary or permanent production downgrades, and driving other workforce

issues including historic levels of staff turnover."

Mr Knott warned demand for skilled labour was set to far outstrip supply across all sectors of

the economy, with the problem set to persist for years to come.

AREEA's projections follow calls by Premier Mark McGowan this week for the Commonwealth to ramp up skilled migration as his Government launched a new register designed to connect WA companies with overseas talent.

After returning from an overseas recruitment drive targeting nurses, doctors and tradies this month, Mr McGowan revealed he had requested an increase to the 160,000 places pencilled in for the national migration program in 2022-23.

Last year, a report commissioned by the WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy predicted the State's resources sector could be 33,000 workers short by the second half of 2023 without programs to encourage interstate and international migration.

AREEA's report found the addition of 11,250 workers would grow WA's resources sector by



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7.5 per cent.

WA's resources sector now directly employs 150,700 people, accounting for 51 per cent of the sector's national workforce.

Mr Knott, below, noted the figure represented 34,000 more than the total just over a year ago and about 30,000 more than the peak of the previous mining boom in 2012.

"In terms of forecasted growth, the mining sector is overwhelmingly the strongest contributor of growth in the first phase," he said.

