



Golden era for women in mines

Julie Shuttleworth's career has taken her into the pits and across the world

MARK EGGLETON

THE day began early for Julie Shuttleworth, who is general manager of Barrick Gold's Granny Smith mine in Western Australia. There was a 4am wake-up call before a 6am flight out of Perth to Laverton (north of Kalgoorlie) and a 7am breakfast meeting at the mine for a handover discussion before she started another eight-day roster.

For Shuttleworth, having eight days on followed by six days off is a pretty easy roster compared with her stint in Tanzania, where it was nine weeks on and four weeks off. Either way, she is passionate about mining and working as a fly-in, fly-out contractor.

Working onsite is pretty structured, with most days kicking off at about 6am in the mess, where breakfast is served and a pre-packed lunch is picked up. From there it's straight to the mine gate for a 12-hour shift every day. After 6pm it's either off to the gym or a game of squash or tennis, followed by a healthy dinner and maybe an hour or so in the wet mess, having a couple of drinks and a chat with her co-workers.

According to Shuttleworth, Barrick encourage workers to fol-

low a fairly healthy lifestyle onsite while also allowing them to relax a little at night.

"You can always head to the wet mess for a couple of drinks and we fly in bands occasionally as well," she says, "but once you're through the mine gate the next morning, there's a zero-tolerance approach to alcohol. We breath-test everyone at the gate every morning."

Life as a female FIFO worker has changed in recent years as the resources industry has tried to attract women. The industry has become more flexible as companies see the need to retain women.

Shuttleworth says there probably is still a long way to go but things have improved since she started work in the 1990s.

"There are a lot of opportunities for women and it's important people realise they don't have to turn into rough and tumble mining types. Women need to just be themselves, set their goals and never give up. I have sometimes seen women put on a show to try and fit in, but there's no need.

"Moreover, there are heaps of FIFO roles ranging from health and safety to accounting, truck driving, nursing, laboratory tech-

nicians or in human resources.

"There are plenty of careers to choose from. You can even work onsite as a chef or cleaner," Shuttleworth says.

She says women make up about 12 per cent of Barrick's Granny Smith mine workforce, well above the industry average.

After she graduated from WA's Murdoch University with a double major in metallurgy and chemistry, Shuttleworth began her career working in WA with Newcrest before stints in China and Africa. Then she returned to the west in 2010.

She says she spent almost 10 years in Africa with Barrick Gold, which remains a career highlight because it was a lot of fun beyond the hard work.

"There were a lot of challenges, training people up, but as an expert you're accorded a lot of respect — especially because I was willing to get in there and be covered with slurry and mud," Shuttleworth says.

Beyond mining, Shuttleworth loved Africa because her roster allowed her time to travel and she visited close to 80 countries, indulging her passions for mountain-climbing, scuba diving and hiking. She also enjoyed

working with local communities, building schools, health facilities and water wells.

As for the toughest challenges working in Tanzania, they were mostly to do with logistics as it took up to six months to get equipment delivered to the site.

There were other women on the site and, importantly, "working for a First World company with First World standards meant conditions didn't seem any different from Australia".

Shuttleworth says she tends to see her friends and family more than she might otherwise, while working as a FIFO contractor. "Rosters are very attractive nowadays and everyone gets to see their family more because they get to spend more time at home. Some companies are even offering even-

time rosters where you're really only working 50 per cent of the year.

"There's a real pressure on mining companies to offer more attractive rosters and some are offering annual leave as well. It's actually pretty good for families with kids."

Shuttleworth is a strong supporter of the Australian Women in Resources Alliance and is passionate about inspiring younger resource professionals, especially women.

"We need to raise awareness of the diversity of opportunities to school-aged kids as there's limited knowledge out there. What's more, it's not just about attracting women but everyone into mining," she says.

Shuttleworth attempts to inspire young people by getting out into schools and universities to share her passion for mining.

"I attend a number of events every year to share my story, let people know about the great work-life balance and the career diversity. I give students tips on entering the industry and even show them pictures of me onsite as well as travelling the world. It's a great career and it's important to get people to think about mining and to live life a bit more."

Shuttleworth says opportunities for women in the resources sector go beyond FIFO contracts.

"There are a lot of residential options where women can see their families every day in towns as diverse as Port Hedland, Dampier, Karratha and more. Mining can suit anyone's lifestyle."

As for Shuttleworth's career, it continues to go from strength to strength. Last year she picked up the prize for Australian mine manager of the year at the Australian Mining and Prospect Awards. This follows other recent accolades, including the 2007 Telstra WA young businesswoman of the year award, and she was a finalist in last year's WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy's Women in Resources awards.

In recent years, she has sponsored the Julie Shuttleworth prize in mineral processing at Murdoch University.

"It's the school's top prize and it's my way of giving something back to the university. Interestingly, the first three years saw the award go to men, but since 2009 it has gone to women."

Alliance taps into a key resource

FOR Barrick Gold's Julie Shuttleworth, the resources industry is obviously still male dominated but she likes to see herself as a positive role model for the whole industry.

She participates in a number of seminars and presentations designed not just to attract women but to "encourage everyone to consider a career in the resources sector".

She supports the industry-led Australian Women in Resources Alliance, created in partnership with the federal government "to further develop and engage one of the greatest underutilised sources of labour — women".

AWRA's objective is to attract and retain more women in the resources, allied and construction sectors and to provide employers with two big competitive advantages, a greater pool of talented labour and strength through

workforce diversity.

Working in partnership with representatives from industry, government and academia, AWRA hopes to increase the number of women working in resources and thus to assist the industry to meet its demand for skilled labour.

At present, women represent 45 per cent of the total Australian workforce, but only 16 per cent of workers in the resources industry.

AWRA wants to raise female participation to 25 per cent of the resources, allied and construction sectors' workforce by 2020.

Australian Mines and Metals Association chief executive Steve Knott says the industry needs to make it a strategic business priority to maximise gender diversity in its organisations.

"This will help enable us to realise our full potential," he says.

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MINE GENERAL MANAGER