

EDUCATION

Effort to attract more women to resources

ONE of the nation's peak resources bodies has launched a nationwide urgent initiative to boost female participation in the crucial sector.

The plan includes visits to schools by workers in mining and engineering at every level, right through to CEO; the elimination of tolerance for discrimination and sexual harassment; family-friendly rosters; and boosting working conditions for male and female workers.

The initiative was thrashed out by stakeholders, including employers and industry groups, at the Australian Mines and Metals Association West Coast Conference.

The Australian Women in Resources Alliance will implement the series of strategies to increase the attraction and improve the retention of women in the resources industry, uniting a range of peak industry bodies and stakeholders in the cause.

National resource industry employer group AMMA is working in partnership with industry and the federal government's Critical Skills Investment Fund for the project, which will implement recommendations from the National Resources Sector Workforce Strategy.

"Increasing the number of female workers in the resources and allied construction sectors has been identified as an essential strategy in meeting the industry's escalating demand for workers. This includes all roles, from construction-based labouring jobs . . . to highly skilled professionals," AMMA director Minna Knight tells *The Australian*.

"AWRA will build on many of the outstanding industry initiatives and networking groups already doing great things for female resources workers.

"This project gives us an opportunity to unite all these

organisations under one banner and take a nationally co-ordinated approach to increasing the attraction and retention of female workers in the resource industry."

Implementing workplace policies, systems and procedures that heighten the attractiveness of the resources sector for female workers is just one strategic focus of AWRA. Under the direction of its leadership committee, the alliance will also facilitate and promote the appropriate cultural change required to accommodate greater female participation on resources projects.

"The AWRA project will identify gaps in the application of policy and practices at worksites, while also developing guidance and assistance in terms of worksite best practices and female workforce development," Knight says.

"This is an exciting and inclusive project that will build on existing networks and initiatives and work towards a vitally effective outcome for the resource industry."

The conference also launched an online jobs and careers portal, miningoilandgasjobs.com.

Knight praises the schools initiative, which has already been rolled out in some regions.

"It allows girls to see what it would be like to work in resources, so they know they can do anything in this sector."

"There are similar initiatives, but not Australia-wide. The whole purpose of AWRA is to start rolling out these sort of things across the nation."

There are also plans to implement similar programs in universities and put in place leadership development programs for women in the sector, which would create networks for women in the industry as well as mentoring

campaigns, and provide role models.

MARK EGGLETON

'It's an essential strategy in meeting the industry's escalating demand for workers'

MINNA KNIGHT
AMMA DIRECTOR