



Women the focus of forum

KEY players from major resources companies, industry representative bodies and government departments met yesterday for a full-day intensive session aimed at increasing the participation of women in the resources industry.

The meeting of the Australian Women in Resources Alliance leadership took place at the AMMA 2012 National Conference in Perth, and all parties have stepped up the bid for greater attraction and retention of women.

"As the skills shortage continues to put pressure on employers, AWRA is one of the most important and exciting developments that is happening within our industry and the presence of a wide range key industry stakeholders today further confirms that," AMMA executive director of industry services Minna Knight said.

"There is an enormous opportunity to tackle the national labour and skills shortages and allow the projected investment in our industry to reach its potential – by tapping into an underutilised pool of skilled employees and building strength through workforce diversity."

The AWRA project, which is partially funded by the Australian Government, has also secured the support of AMMA board director and OZ Minerals chief executive Terry Burgess, who has signed on as the leader of the AWRA Industry Champions.

Mr Burgess' role will be to lead the industry by example and help and encourage fellow resource employers to implement the best practices and procedures to engage and retain talented women workers.

"There are great opportunities for women in our industry and definitely at OZ Minerals," Mr Burgess said.

"Women remain underrepresented in our industry and increasing female representation is something OZ Minerals is focused on.

"We have formalised our commitment by setting measurable targets that we report externally against in our annual sustainability report."

One of yesterday's key agenda items was reviewing situational research led by Lindley Lord, director of Curtin University's Maureen Bickley Centre for Women in Leadership.

The situational analysis details

the practical and cultural reasons as to why the resource industry only has a 16 per cent female participation rate in its national workforce.

"The AWRA Project has as one of its objectives the development of a data set that will help organisations determine the effectiveness of their initiatives to attract and retain more women," Dr Lord said.

"The aim of this situational analysis is to highlight the data currently being collected and to identify gaps.

"This will enable a base line to be established against which progress of individual organisations and the sector compared to other major sectors in the Australian economy can be measured."

The AWRA project was launched in November 2011 and has since united other regional initiatives under a national banner.

The movement is designing practical tools to help employers break down cultural and operational barriers to women employees.

"The AWRA project now has the full support of the industry, but it's now appropriate that we step up this evolution of our workforce and start implementing real solutions at the coal face," Ms Knight said.