



HERALD NEWS

5000 women now in mines



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BUSINESS REPORTER

WHEN Anna Walsh graduated from the University of NSW with a bachelor of mining engineering in 2001 the mining industry was in a slump and jobs were scarce.

Today miners are again facing tough operating times but for women in the industry, things could arguably never be better.

The Department of Family and Community Services's Women in NSW 2012 report shows that about 5000 women are employed state-wide in mining and that figure has almost doubled since 1997.

The Australian Mines and Metals Association says women fill 18 per cent of the nation's mining jobs and in March this year the NSW Minerals Council launched

Women in Mining NSW, designed both to give women in the industry a chance to network and to help boost the number of females in what has traditionally been a male-dominated industry.

The surge of female mining productivity is no surprise to Ms Walsh, a mining engineer at Centennial Coal's Mandalong Mine who will soon take her second maternity leave.

Ms Walsh, 34, whose partner Matthew works at the mine as a fitter, admits she never gave a thought to how family-friendly the industry could be when she started.

"I just thought, and now believe, that there is a lot of variation for a mining engineer as far as being able to do a range of different jobs, from the management stream to the technical side of things," she said.

"But I soon realised that

Centennial, like other miners, are keen on hiring women and being pro-active in trying to keep them."

Starting at the bottom doing "underground time", Ms Walsh has risen through the ranks and is now part of a projects team working on the Mandalong Southern Extension Project, overseeing the design that will take the mine into the next quarter of a century.

Recent mining engineer graduate Kara Newbury, 23, says her father's long-time work in the industry had influenced her decision to studying for her mining engineering degree at UNSW.

"I've been going to mine sites since the age of 10."

She has had a mix of surface and underground work and has spent time in other areas such as planning and ventilation.