

Steve Knott - Tuesday 14th May, Crown Promenade Melbourne

Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA) Conference

(WELCOME)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to see so many of you here to support the first Australian Women in Resources Alliance Conference, and indeed, what I believe to be the first event of its kind focused on promoting greater gender diversity within the Australian resource industry.

For those of you who I have not met, I am Steve Knott, chief executive of AMMA - the Australian Mines and Metals Association. As the national resource industry employer group, AMMA is very proud to be the founder and facilitator of the Australian Women in Resources Alliance, with the support of the Australian Government.

AWRA's objective is to increase the participation of women in the resource industry workforce from the current 15.2% to 25% by 2020. We are proud to see so many people here today to share in this medium-term goal and the long-term advantages for our industry that will come from it.

The great turnout today confirms that workforce diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity that is front of mind for resource employers.

Increasing the attraction and retention of women is something that employers in our industry take very seriously and this not only translates to great benefits for their individual organisations, but also for wider positive impacts on our industry's performance and competitiveness.

(AWRA HISTORY)

It has been less than two years since AMMA first received support from the Australian Government to take recommendations from the National Resource Sector Workforce Strategy to the next level, and deliver something practical and beneficial for our industry and community.

Specifically, the Taskforce identified that increasing the number of women in the resources and allied construction sectors was essential to meeting our escalating demand for skilled workers.

And so, in late 2011 the Australian Women in Resources Alliance was launched.

AWRA has come a long way in just 18 months since its official launch, and has proven to be a dynamic and evolving initiative, driven by the thirst for innovative solutions from the people in this room.

We have united existing organisations, networking groups and programs nationally, in a coordinated initiative to attract, retain and develop women in our workforce and assist the resource industry to realise the benefits of female participation.

I acknowledge today the contribution of the AWRA Reference Group that has steered this initiative since day one. This group comprises experienced resource industry professionals, academics and representatives of key national and state-based industry associations.

With the collaboration and guidance of these stakeholders, AWRA is having a positive impact and is promoting practical measures to address our industry's diversity challenge.

Before talking a little bit about our industry's responsibility and challenge in this area, I'd like touch on three key initiatives we are rolling out.

(E-MENTORING PROGRAM)

This year began with the launch of the AWRA E-Mentoring Program, which is connecting women in the early stages of their careers with experienced mentors, both male and female, across the country using a cutting-edge web-based platform.

Using E-Mentoring, AWRA is offers a niche solution for women who have found it difficult to access mentoring opportunities due to transient work arrangements, remote locations or non-traditional working hours.

Providing this level of direct career support and guidance to women in our industry is essential to progressing AWRA's mission and we predict this program will continue to go from strength to strength.

(RECOGNISED PROGRAM)

Inside your conference packs you'll find more information about AWRA E-Mentoring and also some information about our exciting next initiative, the AWRA Recognised Program.

The AWRA Recognised Program is all about providing guidance and feedback on participating organisations' diversity strategies and benchmarking against international best practice.

Once assessed, employers will be able to proudly display an AWRA stamp - Bronze – Silver – Gold – or Platinum – reflecting their achievements and commitment to industry best-practice workforce policies and performance in gender diversity and women's workforce participation.

We aim to grow this program into a key point of difference for our industry in the search for leading talent; male and female.

(AWRA AWARD)

The third initiative is our second annual AWRA Award, which recognises an organisation that is demonstrating innovation and excellence in inclusive workplace initiatives and practices; an organisation that is championing the objectives of AWRA.

Selected company leaders from AMMA's membership recently acted as judges for our annual Industry Awards which will be presented at our National Conference Gala Dinner on Thursday night.

The AWRA Award is in just its second year but the number of high-calibre entrants we received made the judging process very difficult. A challenge that was welcomed may I add.

Prior to breaking for lunch we have a small presentation for the four companies who are shortlisted as our finalists for the AWRA Award: Anglo American Metallurgical Coal, Chevron, Newcrest Mining and Oz Minerals.

(THE CHALLENGE)

These three initiatives, e-Mentoring, the Recognise Program and the AWRA Award are the core initiatives currently in place to progress AWRA's goals.

While we aim for 25% women participation by 2020, we all understand that achieving diversity and inclusion in the resource industry requires a long-term focus on sustainable and practical initiatives.

The resource industry has traditionally been male-dominated. Women comprise around 45% of the total Australian workforce, but just 15.2% of the resource workforce.

In recent times our industry has undergone incredible employment growth, with 126,000 more people working in resources than just five years ago.

We are seeing more and more women look to resources as a viable and rewarding career option, but the sheer growth in numbers means the overall representation of women remains comparatively low.

And so, as decision makers in this industry, we must continue to collaborate, engage and learn from each other to successfully take advantage of our industry's growth rather than let it become an obstacle to reaching that 25% mark.

For without greater diversity future industry growth will not be assured in this country, and the Australian resource industry will be held back by an endemic skills shortage.

(THE OPPORTUNITY)

Everybody in this room understands the responsibility we have to increase the participation of women in our industry.

This is both a responsibility and an opportunity, as we seek to not only meet our social obligations as one of Australia's most significant employers, but to facilitate the strongest possible workforce to realise our industry's potential.

And what a potential that is. The Australian resource industry has an estimated \$650 billion worth of projects in the pipeline. However, more than half of this capital value is uncommitted or awaiting final approval.

While the ability for our industry to secure potential investment hinges on a number of factors – including cost, regulation and productivity – the demand for skilled labour remains a massive challenge.

This means we need to get better at engaging women and ensuring skills, qualifications and opportunities best align women with the needs of our industry.

It is our responsibility and opportunity as an industry to advance gender diversity, not merely by complying with the minimum requirements, but by addressing

organisational and industry cultures to better engage the contemporary Australian community.

Encouraging more women to get involved in resources means improving our policies and practices; changing perceptions; and becoming the industry of choice for female workers. AMMA is proud to be playing our part through the AWRA initiative.

(CONFERENCE)

This inaugural AWRA Conference is dedicated to understanding and improving the way we approach diversity strategies and practices.

Today's program brings together leading specialists in gender diversity and the knowledge of how it can be effective in our unique industry.

High calibre presentations today include key lessons on leadership; the benefits of increasing women's participation; the latest gender-specific research; developing diversity strategies; addressing unconscious bias; and how to increase women's participation in leadership.

Following lunch, you'll have the opportunity to select from two concurrent streams of presentations, one designed for those at the beginning of the workforce diversity journey, and the other for those who are more advanced and are looking to take the next steps.

We have a remarkable program of presentations today. I am sure you are looking forward to hearing from all the speakers and networking among your industry peers and colleagues during today's breaks.

I also hope you can stay for some networking drinks at the close conference, where I am sure there will be much to reflect on and discuss.