



# **Gender pay equity and associated issues for women in mining - Survey Report**

(2009)

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*iii. Increase the number of child care centres in regional and remote areas, ensuring that operating hours correlate with prevailing work patterns in the region*

*iv. Develop educational resources for companies aimed at increasing equitable participation by men and women in the workforce*

*v. Develop educational resources for companies aimed on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave*

*vi. Implement a Paid Parental Leave policy as recommended by the Productivity Commission*

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **The AusIMM and WIMNet**

This is a joint initiative of The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (The AusIMM), the leading organisation representing professionals in the minerals sector, and the Women in Mining Networking Committee (WIMNet), a network of professional women in mining operating under the auspices of The AusIMM.

Currently women account for only 18% of the mining workforce, compared with 42% of the total Australian workforce. The numbers of women in operational roles is particularly low, with women comprising only 7% of the technical professional workforce and 3% of the site based workforce.<sup>1</sup> Increasing the equitable participation of women in mining is a key goal for WIMNet and The AusIMM.

### **Gender Pay Equity and Associated Issues for Women in Mining Report**

The Gender Equity and Associated Issues for Women in Mining Survey (hereafter the 'Gender Equity Survey') is a qualitative and quantitative survey carried out under the auspices of WIMNet aimed at examining the drivers of the gender pay gap and the static low participation of women in the professional mining work force, and proposing solutions to overcome the underlying issues.

The Survey was completed by approximately 700 professionals in the minerals sector, of whom 68% are female.

Following analysis, issues affecting equitable participation were identified and grouped into three main categories, with solutions proposed to address each category:

#### *1. Issues that affect females particularly (regardless of caring responsibilities)*

A range of options were suggested to address *issues that affect females particularly*. These ranged from programs aimed at building confidence and capacity of individual women, to proactive measures aimed at changing culture within the organisation, as well as systems for greater transparency of pay. Some of the particular measures suggested include:

- Identifying and promoting senior female role models within the organisation
- Facilitating opportunities for women in mining to develop mentoring relationships with other women in mining
- Developing targeted confidence building and leadership programs aimed at women
- Education programs aimed at senior management on the importance of diversity
- Ensuring that comparative gender analysis of salaries is conducted within the organisation
- Ensuring that company sponsored social events are inclusive

#### *2. Issues that affect people with caring responsibilities (both males and females)*

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<sup>1</sup> Minerals Council of Australia, 'Unearthing New Resources – Attracting and Retaining Women in the Australian Mining Industry,' (May 2007) at [http://www.minerals.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/20275/MCA\\_Women\\_In\\_Mining\\_Web\\_Version.pdf](http://www.minerals.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/20275/MCA_Women_In_Mining_Web_Version.pdf)

The survey results showed that barriers to equitable participation of carers affected both males and females. However in general these issues tend to affect women more as they often take on the majority of caring responsibilities. A key issue that came to light was the need for clarity around the concept of flexible work practices – what it meant and how it could be implemented whilst maintaining fairness and transparency for other employees. Another major issue was effectively managing career breaks and the need for flexibility following the birth of a child. Respondents also emphasised the importance of ensuring that all flexibility policies are available to males and females equally. Some of the particular measures suggested include:

- Define what a commitment to workplace flexibility actually means and communicate throughout the organisation
- Develop a pro forma and credible worked examples to assist in transparent implementation of workplace flexibility
- Develop a return-to-work policy to manage leave following the birth of a child
- Aim to retain the employee at the same level of responsibility following the birth of the child
- Remove stigma from male employees accessing flexible work arrangements for the purpose of shared care

### *3. Issues that affect people in roles that employ 'softer' skills (both males and females)*

Respondents commented that hard engineering roles tend to be valued more than science and planning roles. This was regardless of whether the role was located at head office and or site based. As males tended to be clustered in hard engineering roles and women are more likely to be in science based roles and planning roles, this can translate into lower average salaries for females within a mining organisation. The following measures were recommended:

- Implement a systematic approach to skill levels and pay bands, which is consistent across all disciplines and all types of roles
- Review incentive arrangements to ensure appropriate measures are in place to recognise a significant contribution for all types of roles, not just where there is a direct and obvious correlation with production output

### **Government Support Policies**

The final section of the report discusses on respondents' attitudes towards Government Support policies. The Gender Equity Survey asked respondents a range of qualitative questions around support policies, and also asked them to rank the impact that each of the below policies would have on gender equity:

- Paid parental leave
- Tax deductibility of work related child care expenses
- Fringe Benefits Tax removed from employer sponsored child care (currently only available for employer-run centres)
- Greater investment in Government accreditation of child care workers
- Education programs aimed at employers to inform on gender equity, flexible work arrangements and the gender pay gap
- Education programs aimed at employers to inform on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave

The policies that respondents felt most strongly about were the tax deductibility of child care and removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax from employer sponsored child care options, with around 80% of respondents indicating that these policies would have an impact on gender equity, and close to 50% ranking them as having a

'significant impact'. In their qualitative responses, a large number of respondents also stated that availability of child care places where they are needed, at times when they are needed were often a bigger issue than cost in rural and regional areas.

Most respondents however felt that a paid parental leave policy would be beneficial, with 79% indicating that it would have an impact on gender equity. However 6.9% indicated that it would have a 'negative impact'; the qualitative responses showed that respondents had mixed feelings about this measure. Although many felt that a paid parental leave policy would send a strong symbolic message that having a child is a legitimate activity for an employee to undertake, many expressed concern that if entitlements were viewed as onerous on employers there could be a backlash against hiring women. Respondents felt that any mandatory policy should be funded by the Government, with employers topping up paid parental leave entitlements as part of their own attraction and retention policies if they wished.

Approximately three quarters of respondents (75.4%) indicated that education programs aimed at employers to inform on gender equity, flexible work arrangements and the pay gap would have some impact on gender equity. Qualitatively a significant number of respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring that the company culture was supportive of diversity policy, as line managers were not always encouraging towards initiatives such as flexible work practices and women in mining networking events, even when supported at corporate level.

Similarly, just over three quarters (77.1%) of the roughly equivalent majority felt that education programs aimed at employers to inform them on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave would have some impact. According to qualitative responses, return-to-work following maternity leave was often managed poorly, with a number of female respondents indicating that they had been unfairly refused part time arrangements to balance caring responsibilities, or had been allocated roles well below their previous level of responsibility.

#### **Next Steps – Analysis by Office of Women**

The data collected as part of the Gender Equity Survey is currently being analysed by the Office of Women Queensland, drawing on more formal academic methodology that was used in the preparation of this document.

That is, the analysis undertaken for this report has been primarily taken with a view to suggest strategies to increase the equitable participation of males and females in mining use by individuals, companies and Government

The joint Office of Women AusIMM Report will be launched in mid 2009. As with this report, all material reported for public use will preserve anonymity of individual respondents and their employer companies.

## 2. THE AUSIMM AND WIMNET

The AusIMM is the leading organisation representing professionals in the minerals sector in the Australasian region, with approximately 9,100 members, whose areas of expertise are primarily in the technical disciplines of metallurgy, mining engineering and geoscience. Women currently comprise approximately 10% of our membership. Increasing women's equitable participation in the minerals sector is a policy priority for The AusIMM.

The WIMNet Committee is sub group of The AusIMM aimed at supporting women in mining. Activities undertaken by, or driven by WIMNet include

- Organising women in mining networking events to support and encourage women in the industry
- Conducting research into work practices and trends affecting women in the industry
- Raising awareness of women's contribution to mining by encouraging their participation in AusIMM activities.
- Advocacy within industry on leading practices to increase diversity and improve retention generally
- Advocacy with Government on policies affecting retention of women, such as paid parental leave, child care support etc

Increasing the equitable participation of women in mining is a key goal for WIMNet and The AusIMM. Currently women account for only 18% of the mining workforce, compared with 42% of the total Australian workforce. The numbers of women in operational roles is particularly low, with women comprising only 7% of the technical professional workforce and 3% of the site based workforce.<sup>2</sup> These numbers have remained roughly static over the past decade.

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<sup>2</sup> Minerals Council of Australia, 'Unearthing New Resources – Attracting and Retaining Women in the Australian Mining Industry,' (May 2007) at [http://www.minerals.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/20275/MCA\\_Women\\_In\\_Mining\\_Web\\_Version.pdf](http://www.minerals.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/20275/MCA_Women_In_Mining_Web_Version.pdf)

### **3. BACKGROUND**

The AusIMM has been involved in a number of research projects aimed at investigating the causes of the low participation of women in mining.

#### **Women in Mining Report**

In 1997 The AusIMM supported PhD candidate Catherine Pattenden in preparing a report on Women in Mining. The report, released in 1998, found that the minerals industry was the most highly sex segregated industry in Australia and made a number of recommendations that were subsequently incorporated into the mission of The AusIMM WIMNet.<sup>3</sup> Since then The AusIMM has been involved in a number of research initiatives conducted under the auspices of WIMNet.

#### **The AusIMM Remuneration and Employment Surveys**

The AusIMM Remuneration and Employment Survey (hereafter, 'The AusIMM Remuneration Survey') is sent to all members of The AusIMM. In 2008 there were 1448 responses received in total, of which 141, or roughly 10%, were female. According to The AusIMM 2008 Remuneration Survey, a considerable gender pay gap currently exists for mining technical professionals at all levels of responsibility, commencing at 3% for graduates at Level 1, and escalating to 32% for senior managers at Level 5. This was similar to findings in the 2007 Remuneration Survey.

Responses to quantitative questions about caring responsibilities in the 2008 Remuneration Survey also showed that the pressures of caring responsibilities frequently resulted in downshifting and turnover by professionals, more often for females than for males. That is, 57.4% of female respondents caring for a child indicated that their caring responsibilities had necessitated a reduction in hours compared with 19.2% of males caring for a child. Meanwhile 25.5% of female respondents caring for a child indicated that caring responsibilities had caused them to take a similar role in a different organisation, compared with 8.4% of males caring for a child.

The results also revealed strongly that the costs of child care adversely affected retention of both males and females. Notably, 15.5% of all respondents caring for a child indicated that costs of caring are a disincentive to continue to work in the minerals sector.

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<sup>3</sup> Pattenden, C., 'Women in Mining – A report to the Women in Mining Taskforce of The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy,' (November 1998) c/o Anthropology Programme, The University of Melbourne, at <http://www.ausimm.com.au/content/docs/wimreport.pdf>

#### **4. GENDER PAY EQUITY SURVEY AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES FOR WOMEN IN MINING**

The results of the earlier AusIMM Remuneration Survey raised a number of questions that could not be answered purely with recourse to quantitative data. These included:

- What factors were driving the gender pay gap?
- How prevalent is gender-based discrimination in the mining industry and how does it affect equity?
- How were employers addressing the needs of carers and what was the impact on career opportunities?
- Where might Government policies facilitate more equitable strategies for dealing with all of the above issues?

Thus, in August 2008 *The Gender Pay Equity and Work Practices Survey* was developed to help answer these questions. The Survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions included four key sections:

1. Key drivers of the pay gap
2. Diversity policy and workplace culture
3. Impact of caring responsibilities on work
4. Effectiveness of government policy

The Survey was sent to all AusIMM members via our weekly newsletter, *AusIMM News and Week in Review*, as well as being distributed to 600 subscribers of the *Women in Mining Network Committee News*. The Survey was also circulated by the Queensland Resources Council (QRC) and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy in Western Australia (CMEWA) to their member companies.

To date, 698 responses have been received. Of the respondents, 68% are female and 32% are male. The most commonly represented professions are Geoscientists (29%), Mining Engineers (18%), Managers (17%) and Metallurgists (10%). A significant number of responses were also received from professionals working as environmental scientists, consultants, human resources officers and safety and health advisers.<sup>4</sup>

##### **a) Key issues affecting equitable participation in mining**

Respondents identified a range of issues that adversely affected the equitable participation of females in mining. These issues could be separated into three categories:

- 1. Issues that affect females particularly (regardless of caring responsibilities)**
- 2. Issues that affect people with caring responsibilities (both males and females)**
- 3. Issues that affect people in roles that employ 'softer' skills (both males and females)**

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<sup>4</sup> For detailed information regarding demographics of respondents and quantitative responses go to Appendix 1 – Quantitative Data.

### ***i. Issues that affect females particularly (regardless of caring responsibilities)***

Both female and male respondents frequently identified the below listed issues as major barriers to the equitable participation of women in the workplace:

- The tendency for some senior male managers to promote people more like 'themselves'
- Females subjected to overt sexual harassment and sexist verbal put-downs at work
- The perception by some that females are more likely to have children and therefore it was a risk to invest in professional development for them
- The perception by some that women overall are less competent in senior roles
- Some males resenting the idea of reporting to a female manager
- The prevalence of a drinking culture and its adverse affect on networking opportunities for females
- Females underselling themselves in their careers
- Females feeling isolated in their workplaces due to low numbers
- Females feeling that there is no career path for them due to low number of female role models in senior positions

The assumptions of bias and sexism underlying some of the above listed perceptions were confirmed in comments from a *small number of male respondents* (note that most responses from male respondents were supportive of gender equity). These included statements that:

- Men, by their nature, have a stronger work ethic
- Men are intrinsically better than women at managing other men
- Women don't have the natural authority to manage
- The industry has a 'blokey' culture and women will never fit in with that
- Women should not put their children in child care in order to work, as this represents an abdication of their proper role as primary care givers
- Women don't like to live in regional areas without amenities
- Women don't cope well with working in developing countries
- As soon as women have children, they will lose all dedication to the job
- Women cannot handle the drinking culture and behave inappropriately on site

It is important to note that there were a large number of respondents who felt confident that discrimination did not take place in their workplace, and a number of male and female respondents at senior management level who expressed a deep commitment to gender equity. The above issues do not reflect all managers or all workplaces. However the pockets of discrimination indicate that a more proactive approach to gender diversity in organisations is necessary to achieve more equitable workplaces.

### ***ii. Issues that affect people with caring responsibilities (both males and females affected)***

It became clear upon analysing the data that issues around balancing work and caring responsibilities were not particular to females. Although these issues have historically affected females more than men, difficulties gaining acceptance within the workplace of the legitimacy of caring responsibilities were cited repeatedly by both

male and female respondents as adversely affecting their equitable participation in the industry.

The key issues that affect carers' equitable participation in the workplace (inc. retention) were identified as follows:

- The perception that a person who has significant caring responsibilities is less committed to their career than a person without them
- Requests for flexible work arrangements viewed negatively or not fairly considered
- Professionals who make use of flexible policies viewed as less committed by colleagues
- Culture of overtime and focus on hours over outputs
- Limited measures taken to accommodate people who had caring responsibilities (e.g. scheduling of meeting times)
- Limited acceptance of males undertaking caring responsibilities (male specific issue)
- Few companies implementing meaningful paid parental leave
- A lack of on-ramps for the primary carer following extended parental leave
- Limited acceptance of males needing to balance professional demands with partners career (male specific issue)
- Lack of access to quality, affordable child care

Some respondents were directly opposed to the idea that holding significant caring responsibilities were compatible with a career in mining. These included statements to the effect that:

- In order to be effective in the mining industry, an employee needs to be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- An employee must put their job ahead of their family
- An employer should not be 'bothered' with an employee's non-work priorities

The overall data reflected a wide gulf between those respondents who felt that caring responsibilities could be managed within a career in the mining industry, and those that felt that significant caring responsibilities were not compatible in a career in mining. This is clearly an area where greater dialogue and consistent policies are needed to increase participation, engagement and retention in the workplace.

***iii. Issues that affect people in roles that employed 'softer' skills (both males and females affected)***

Respondents commented that roles in which males are clustered (i.e. hard engineering roles, site based roles, and roles which can be immediately tied to production benefit) tend to be viewed as more important to the company, and remunerated at higher levels, than roles in which females tend to be clustered (i.e. science and research roles, head office and non engineering specialist roles). This gap in remuneration affects both males and females who are in the latter type roles

## **b) SOLUTIONS to issues that affect women particularly (regardless of caring responsibilities)**

Responses pertaining to *issues that affect women particularly* were analysed for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, with a view to identifying solutions. The following solutions were distilled from analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

### ***i. Implement a process for tracking the gender pay gap***

According to quantitative results from the survey, female respondents are more likely to feel that they are paid less than other people who perform a comparable role. That is, 41.5% of female respondents believe they are paid less than their peers, compared with only 19.8% of male respondents. A small majority of female respondents feel they were paid about the same (55.1%), compared with a large majority of male respondents (71.6%).

In terms of transparency of salaries, 51.7% of male respondents feel that there is sufficient transparency of salaries, compared with only 26.6% of female respondents.

In the qualitative responses, a large number of female respondents cited instances of being underpaid on the basis of gender. Those who felt they were being underpaid responded to this knowledge in a number of ways – some accepted the difference, some became less engaged with the company but persevered with the role, and others either left the company or challenged the status quo:

*“When I left my previous role, I found out I was paid ~\$20k less than less qualified males with less experience. This has continued throughout my career. I (and management) realise I am doing a better job than males in the organisation but are not prepared to increase my salary. I enjoy my job but this makes me feel exploited.”* Engineer, Female.

*“As a female I know that I should be paid more and am earning less than my male equivalents. I feel hard done by but just accept it and move on - money isn't everything and the experience is worth it.”* Management, Female.

*“Whilst on vacation work I was paid at the time below what I found out they paid a group of men that came in a few weeks before me double what I received. I believe it was because I didn't really know what to ask for and didn't have a lot of connections at the time. They offered me a small amount and I didn't realise at the time I could ask for more.”* Student, Female.

*“I have spent many years in the dark, assuming my company treats me fairly, but recently discovered this was far from true. The company had to give me a [significant]...pay-rise to adjust my salary to that of my (all male) peers.”* Geoscientist, Female.

The possibility of mandatory pay gap reporting was canvassed in the questionnaire and received mixed responses. Many respondents indicated that more transparency regarding salary arrangements would assist fairness in negotiations, and in particular assist females in overcoming cultural issues relating to lack of confidence, as well as weeding out the worst instances of discrimination. However a large number raised issues such as privacy, resentment amongst staff and loss of engagement of employees who were paid lower salaries legitimately due to poor performance over a particular period as counter arguments against such a move.

Many respondents indicated that the large variety of factors that impacted on salary at professional level such as the number of reports, experience, scope of duties,

location and roster, would make difficult to capture and meaningfully analyse comparative salaries for particular professional roles.

In general, most respondents did not necessarily want comprehensive information on what their peers were earning, but were interested to see a benchmark of salary ranges for both males and females for their particular organisation.

*"I think they could provide average salaries split into genders for each level of position and location of work. Each position has an allowable range. These ranges are not made public."* Geoscientist, Female.

*"When pay inequity in the industry is mentioned in a report or article, it's easy for a company to say 'but that isn't our data'. Most companies probably don't even measure it. Generally, the desire to avoid negative reputational impact causes organisations to take action. I wish that I believed that companies will pro-actively solve this issue, but there is little evidence to suggest that they will."* Management, Female.

For many respondents, an indication that their company was monitoring and acting on the salary gap was seen as the primary goal. That is, ensuring that the gender pay gap was brought to the attention of management was seen as *more* important than making it widely available to staff.

*"It's like anything when you have numbers in front of any board room meeting it makes people take notice. Especially management! When we don't make enough money, when we spend too much money, when we don't pull enough tonnes out the pit they notice. If we reversed the role and we showed them our pay every 12 months compared to opposite sex I'm sure they would see our point."* Shot firer, Female.

*"The knowledge that an external party was overseeing things would be at least comforting. The current situation is far from transparent. Employees are told salary reviews have been completed they are being fairly paid with respect to the market, when this is clearly not the case."* Geoscientist, Female.

## **SOLUTIONS – Options for Companies**

- **Report average salaries in equivalent pay bands broken down by gender**
- **Support capturing of gender data in cross-company salary surveys such as the McDonalds Survey and AusIMM Remuneration and Employment survey**
- **Capture data on pay differences by gender for the purpose of analysis and redress at a management level. Communicate to staff that this is being done.**

### ***ii. Identify and support visible female role models within the organisation and/or industry***

Female respondents indicated that the visibility of female role models, or senior women within the organisation and/or industry had a significant impact on their engagement and motivation. Males also indicated that this had a positive effect on their perception of female colleagues as well as on new entrants to the industry.

*"[Having senior female role models] gives me an enormous amount of hope that it's possible, it stops me giving up. I especially like seeing very senior women with senior husbands with children."* Engineer, Female.

*"[As we have senior female role models] we always have a strong story to tell and excellent visible support structures, when we are attempting to attract other professional women into our business."* Consulting Services, Male.

A number of women who could not identify senior women in the industry reported discouragement with their own career prospects.

*"The Senior Management is mainly male with the few females in the administrative/HR functions. It looks like a typically masculine environment, discourages females from staying around long enough to progress."* Female, HR.

*"Convincing management to give you a go is harder because they don't have any idea what a woman would be like in that role, so they don't do it because of the uncertainty."* Management, Female.

*"No women in more senior roles, so that I find I need to ask for every opportunity. Consider that I am one of the pioneers in the organisation."* Geoscientist, Female.

Some women who were in senior roles reported that their organisation did not encourage them taking an active role to encourage other women.

*"I have unfortunately struggled to get the recognition needed for other women to be mentored and encouraged up the ladder. The guys are comfortable keeping the girls less skilled and less developed and less networked than them as it is less threatening for them."* Female, Management.

### **SOLUTIONS – Options for Companies**

- **Increase visibility of women who have attained senior positions within the company**
- **Encourage women who have attained senior positions to speak at women in mining events if they wish to do so**

#### ***iii. Facilitate access to female mentors***

According to our survey, only 48% of female respondents were able to identify female role models and mentors within their organisation.

Females who stated that they had access to mentors indicated that their female mentors were an invaluable resource for both personal support, and to troubleshoot technical problems:

*"It helps a lot when trying to deal with a problem with others on site. Her advice is often more tailored to how a woman can achieve the desired outcome without being seen as either a bitch or a nagging wife."* Geoscientist, Female.

*"I am more comfortable approaching them with "silly" questions, i.e. something I am not quite sure about, but probably should know the answer to."* Process Engineer, Female.

*"I can watch how she manages her job around her life. There are no female mentors at the management level though and for a female graduate it is difficult to see the career progression and how it fits around raising a family."* Engineer, Female.

Male respondents whose organisations facilitated access to mentors also suggested that this was of benefit to their female staff.

*"[Access to female mentors] gives our younger female staff someone to talk to when talking to males may not have been as productive."* Consulting services, Male.

*"I let the women geos go for the occasional coffee and chat session in town to talk about relevant stuff to them. This is very informal..."* Geoscientist, Male.

A number of female respondents who did not have mentors indicated that they felt discouraged by this.

*"[I struggle] to have deep and meaningful conversations with receptionists and administration assistants who can't really understand the issues a female engineer is faced with. I am predominantly left to fend for myself."* Engineer, Female.

*"[The] majority of management are males and it is very hard to be mentored by them if we have different issues (both at work and home) and different points of view generally speaking."* Engineer, Female.

Not all female respondents indicated that they wanted a mentor however. A large number also indicated that gender was irrelevant to them in choosing a mentor.

*"I would always choose a mentor that has the skills, knowledge and experience that is relevant to my situation - regardless of gender."* Government, Female.

## **SOLUTIONS FOR COMPANIES**

- **Implement a women in mining committee in-house where women can access mentors as needed**
- **Provide female employees with access to women in mining networking events where they can access mentors informally or as needed**
- **Implement a formal system of mentoring for female employees**

### ***iv. Provide support for women in mining networking events***

There are currently a range of women in mining networking events running at various locations around Australia. The events vary in size and format. They may have a technical focus, be aimed at more general professional development, or be purely social networking events. Some are run in-house by companies, whereas others are run by individuals, or through email/online networks supported by The AusIMM and WIMNet.

According to quantitative data 62.5% of respondents indicated that women in their organisation are supported in attending women in mining networking events. The percentage was roughly even for male and female respondents.

Attitudes to the event were mixed. Some female respondents felt that having women only events undermined the perception of female competence, and also led to alienation of male colleagues. Some men reported feeling alienated by these events.

*"I am not particularly a proponent of this type of program as it indicates that as a female, we require special attention when in fact we only require the same attention, i.e. professional development, leadership development and I always want to be included in the same networking events as my male colleagues."* Management, Female.

*"I don't agree with the Women in Mining programme. There's no Men in Mining alternative. All should have equal opportunity."* Civil Engineer, Male.

The majority of respondents however felt that attendance at events was a positive experience that lowered feelings of isolation and increased engagement with their organisation and the industry.

*"It's nice not to feel isolated in your position. The higher you go the more isolated as a female you are."* Geoscientist, Female.

*"[Networking events allow] women to speak with about issues they feel they can't raise in the workplace - or who have no one they feel they can talk to in the workplace. Helps build relationships with people "like you",* Mining Engineer, Female.

*"I think the WIM events are really good. Initially I was a bit sceptical, I think targeting events at one gender is sexist in theory. However sitting in meetings where I am the only female does leave one feeling a bit isolated at times and the WIM events are really good at reminding me that that's not the case."* Mining Engineer, Female.

*"[The events] give me a greater awareness of my opportunities and make me more comfortable in my role and in pushing 'the boundaries'"* Geoscientist, Female.

A significant number of women stated that although they had an interest in attending women in mining networking events, they had refrained from doing so as they felt that their immediate manager or team would view their participation negatively.

Some female respondents indicated that they were in principle supported in attending such events, however were required to go on their own time and fund their own attendance as this was not viewed as legitimate professional development.

Some respondents who had been involved in organising women in mining events, often as part of their companies' diversity policy, expressed frustration with the lack of support and recognition of such involvement.

*"At the surface the support is strong, however the reality on the ground is that my membership of a women's professional organisation, is viewed by the male staff and openly commented that 'she's at that hairy legged 'lesso' group again'. Quite sad, as such I have reduced my involvement to reduce the comments."* Management, Female.

*"..Despite the company saying that they highly regard people who take on these roles, my feeling is that it does me (and other volunteers on such initiatives) a disservice in our annual performance review. Most of us running the network got an average performance review despite the long hours 'volunteering' for the company. Others who spent the same - or less - amount of time and effort but were involved in projects where money was made/saved instead of the attraction/development/retention of women were certainly given higher performance reviews. I feel as though the thought is, 'She couldn't possibly be busy enough or be giving enough dedication to her 'real' job if she has the time to engage in that!'"* Female, Professional.

Interestingly, females who undertook to organise the events were viewed as particularly loyal by other females in the company.

*"The women who drive the events are the ones who are positive about the company and indicate intentions to stay."* Female, HR.

Access to events was also an issue. Attending was seen as difficult for people who worked FIFO (as events tend to be run mid week), work regionally or overseas as most of the events are held in capital cities.

## **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Run in-house mining events**
- **Provide support for women in mining networking (WIMNet) events**
- **Encourage female staff to attend WIMNet events**

- **Communicate the benefits of attendance to managers in all departments to ensure that females are not discouraged from attending**
- **Try to develop a range of events in a range of locations, to cater to regional and FIFO women**
- **Ensure that females who contribute their time to organising women in mining network events are supported, and that their contribution to meeting company objectives is formally recognised**
- **Develop on-line resources for delivering programs and networking for females who are located regionally or overseas.**

***v. Develop and consistently implement a meaningful company diversity policy***

The vast majority of respondents (70.4%) indicated that their organisation was supportive of gender diversity. However the content of 'support' varied significantly between organisations. Some respondents indicated that whilst they had a Diversity Policy, in practical terms this amounted to a brief induction on Equal Opportunity legislation when joining the company.

For other organisations the diversity policy encompassed a broad range of measures. Some of the strategies companies that had been adopted by companies are listed below:

- Employing a diversity officer at a senior level to monitor and improve the attraction and retention of females
- Targeting females in recruitment drives to increase the number of female applicants for roles
- Including females on selection panels when interviewing other females
- Actively encouraging females to apply for promotions and senior roles
- Tracking participation of females at all levels and professions in the organisation
- Introducing KPIs for participation of females at head office and site level
- Providing employees with access to flexible work arrangements
- Introducing paid parental leave
- Seeking to maintain meaningful part-time professional and senior roles within the organisation
- Subsidising child care or supporting regional child care facilities
- Supporting or running women in mining networking activities
- Ensuring all site designs accommodated and anticipate participation of women (e.g. include female shower facilities, ensure equipment can be adjusted for female proportion operators etc)
- Proactively seeking to eliminate harassment

A large number of respondents indicated that whilst policies existed, these were not applied in a consistent or systematic way in their companies.

*"We have just implemented a flexible work arrangement policy but this means you build a safety case and it's up to your manager to approve this. Your manager is the key and unfortunately there are still a lot of old school teachings around."* Professional, Female.

There were mixed attitudes to KPIs or quotas for female staff. Some respondents felt that the perception that women were not employed on merit would do more to undermine their position than advance it. Those who supported it felt that quotas were the only way to get around unconscious bias in the recruitment and promotion process.

The majority of respondents did not necessarily want mandated quotas, but wanted effective measures in place to ensure that recruitment and promotion was truly equitable, as they felt that there was room for improvement on this front.

*“Develop profile on where women are (and aren't) in the organisation. Is there an administrative ghetto? Measure pay equity. Measure promotion equity. Measure the 'real' reasons for resignations. Gather historical data on career progression of women. Insist on diversity in applicant pools. This one will make a real difference over time. Measure and act.”* Management, Female.

*“We need more women in senior management positions and in HR to ensure women are being employed. Are women on every selection process? Ensure recruitment processes are followed and no short cuts for males who are mates. Better probity. Must have less discretion with performance review assessment process - needs to be transparent to all - both manager and those working for them. If based on performance and reasonably objective the process will improve.”* Environmental Scientist, Female.

*“Lots of proactive measures are possible. This would vary according to size of company, operation and or potential opportunities. Certainly, more work to be done regarding appropriate behaviours (sexism and other negatives) at the coal face.”* Geoscientist, Male.

A number of female respondents indicated that what they primarily wanted was a forum in which they could raise the issues that they were affecting them – as there were no real channels for communication of gender-related issues.

*“We need a safe environment to share our thoughts so if we could have a moment every now and then with the boss where s/he checks everything is going ok and everyone is being treated well he would give us an opportunity to speak then, instead of every time we go to them with things like that they think we are nagging or just being an annoying women.”* Geoscientist, Female.

## **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Develop and implement a diversity policy based on sound data tracking female participation, promotions and retention**
- **Ensure that the policy covers issues including recruitment and promotion, performance appraisal, harassment, mentoring and support, flexibility and caring responsibilities**
- **Ensure that the policy is promoted to staff at all levels**
- **Ensure the policy is regularly reviewed and stakeholders are consulted (all employees)**
- **Ensure that an environment conducive to communication between female employees about their concerns is maintained**

### ***vi. Develop practical training programs aimed at increasing appreciation of diversity at managerial level***

As mentioned above, lack of an appreciation of diversity by managers – both immediate managers and at senior level - was frequently identified as an obstacle to equity in the workplace. A number of respondents indicated that effective diversity training to overcome this would be beneficial. However this was conditional on such programs being soundly based in fact-based data and clearly linked to company objectives.

*“The people who need to change...are the people who don't take the gender programs seriously...improving workplace diversity needs to be done in a more subtle way, i.e. don't*

*make it about gender, make it about improving operational performance through better workplace standards and practices.” Mining Engineer, Female.*

*“Programs for men (or both) targeted at changing perceptions and expectations using fact based data from the company to support the need for change [would be of benefit].” Management, Female.*

A large number of respondents also indicated that although senior management were supportive of diversity and there were a number of programs either in place or being rolled out, at middle management level these objectives were being frustrated.

*“Our first [in-house women in mining] event was held a week ago, invitations were not uniformly sent to all within the business, and the message wasn't given to (typically male) managers to support this. Some women who attended copped flak for attending a "junket" form managers and colleagues.” Professional, Female.*

Education for middle management on the value of diversity to the organisational bottom line, not just senior managers, may assist in reversing this resistance.

### **SOLUTIONS – Options for Companies**

- **Develop fact based programs aimed at management level**
- **Ensuring the organisational importance of diversity is clearly communicated throughout the organisation, and also underpinned by data**

#### ***vii. Develop targeted professional development programs for women aimed at increasing their equitable participation***

Some respondents suggested that in a primarily male environment, some female professionals experienced difficulties with assertiveness, and that this could prove a hindrance to career progression. In particular, both male and female respondents also frequently cited cultural factors such as poor negotiation tactics as having a strong causal link to lower female salaries.

*“Women are less assertive in the application process - we are aware that we are in a minority group within the workplace and therefore don't want to 'push our luck' in asking for more money.” Geoscientist, Female.*

*“Women do not always sell themselves or feel confident in talking themselves up to gain that promotion...the negotiating skills or confidence of women are not always up to that of their male counterparts.” Student, Female.*

*“Women are often willing to be happy with the salary if it is above a certain threshold. It maybe considered impolite and ungrateful for complaining about increases/salaries.” Mining Engineer, Female.*

*“So many women have second roles that they don't list with their title which is convenient for...I think women feel that if they take it on, someone will notice and magically recognise them and pay them what they are worth.” Professional, Female.*

Not all respondents saw targeted professional development as the answer to addressing assertiveness issues. Some female respondents felt that such targeted programs would exacerbate negative male perceptions about female competence i.e. that they needed ‘special help.’ Some male respondents felt that making such programs only available to women was inherently discriminatory.

A large number of female respondents however expressed the view that programs around career planning, confidence and negotiation would be of some utility. Others indicated support for such programs, but felt that they should be open to males and females equally, as lack of assertiveness and/or being part of a minority group were not female-exclusive issues.

*"I think that leadership and self management programs are of benefit to all employees and are not used enough by organisations."* Female, Mining Engineer.

## **SOLUTIONS – Options for companies**

- **Make available training available to female staff which focuses on career planning, confidence, risk taking and negotiation to overcome cultural issues**
- **Make available training to all staff focused on career planning, confidence, risk taking and negotiation to assist with professional development generally**

### ***viii. Encourage social activities that are inclusive of women and carers***

A number of female respondents felt that their ability to build networking and mentor relationships was limited by the strong focus on alcohol related events aimed at singles. Other respondents stated they were explicitly excluded from invites to social drinking events:

*"The operation I worked for had a "boys club" where only the boys were invited to go drinking. Here they discussed the day to day operations and decisions. Managers tend to promote their male mates rather than those that put in the work."* Mining Engineer, Female.

*"Unfortunately pay is not necessarily linked to ability but who you go drinking with on Friday night."* Lawyer, Female.

Some female respondents indicated that although they had been able to participate in networking events when they were single, once they had family responsibilities their ability to participate was limited and this translated to reduced opportunities.

*"The drinking culture aimed at singles not families."* Management, Female.

*"Many male managers...look down on women trying to juggle professional and personal lives, especially if we can't come to the after work drinks."* Geoscientist, Female.

The exclusion of women from some types of events perpetuated a belief, either real or perceived, of a boys club. That is, many women felt that fitting a particular cultural mould was more important than merit in progressing within companies.

*"It's a case of "people like me" syndrome, more difficult for older guys to appreciate that someone who doesn't play golf or talk rugby can do the job just as well if not better than someone just like them,"* Geoscientist, Female.

It is not suggested that companies should seek to exert influence on what employees do in purely social time. Employees will naturally gravitate to social activities with employees with whom they have more in common, and this will sometimes be segregated along gender lines.

However it should be recognised that for company sponsored events, a more inclusive program can help to build better relationships between staff from different

backgrounds, interests and with different time availabilities. This can be achieved through an array of strategies, such as encouraging people with caring responsibilities to participate in social committees, etc.

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **If there is a social committee, seek to involve people with a range of backgrounds and interests to obtain some balance (i.e. ensure the program is not 'captured' by any one group)**
- **Seek to include activities that will appeal to people with caring obligations on the company social program**
- **Seek to include activities that will appeal to both men and women on the company social program**

### **c) SOLUTIONS to issues that affect people with caring responsibilities (both males and females)**

Responses pertaining to issues that affect people with caring responsibilities were analysed for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, with a view to identifying solutions. The following solutions were distilled from analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

#### ***i. Define what a commitment to workplace flexibility means for the organisation***

Responses to the survey indicated that the issue of workplace flexibility has generated contention in the workforce. Some respondents expressed the view that companies should not have to consider flexibility and were highly critical of employees whom they viewed as 'wanting to have it all'. Other respondents stated that companies should make greater effort to accommodate non work priorities, particularly in light of the increasing numbers of employees with caring responsibilities, changing demographics of the workforce and increased expectations regarding quality of life. An example of each of these polarised views appears below:

*"You cannot give the energy and commitment to a highly demanding position and still be a primary care giver. As a society we need to dispel the idiotic notion that a person 'can have it all' - be a highly successful career person and spend heaps of quality time with your family. One part will suffer. Studies are coming thick and fast to support this. Dumping kids in child care so you can pursue a highly successful career does not do your kids any good."*  
Management, Male.

*"Companies should encourage flexible working arrangements to allow shared caring responsibilities. This is a mindset that many senior managers can't fathom as they are baby boomers or builders and they don't believe that it's the father's job to get involved in this area. Progressive employers with a younger corporate group recognise traditional working arrangements don't suit all young families,"* Metallurgist, Male.

Unless there is some consensus of what should properly be required of a professional, tension in the workplace that has a material impact on engagement and retention is likely to result.

As a starting point, companies need to clearly articulate and communicate what a commitment to workplace flexibility actually means. That is, a commitment to workplace flexibility does not - and should not - mean that everyone's expectations are met at the expense of the company. Rather, it means that requests for flexibility are given due consideration in the context of overall organisational effectiveness.

In practice, a commitment to workplace flexibility may entail the following elements:

- A corporate policy that supports workplace flexibility
- A set of criteria against which proposals for work practices will be assessed
- Managers are required to document and report on how they have dealt with requests for flexible work practices
- Senior management audits documented approach to flexible work practices against corporate level commitment
- Progress in achieving corporate level commitment is communicated back to staff

A documented and systematic approach at 'the coal face' is particularly important to ensure consistent implementation of the policy. Many respondents indicated that their company's commitment to workplace flexibility was not realised on site.

*“Many companies have flexibility programs in their policies, but the cultures are often not supportive of individuals accessing these programs.”* Management, Female.

*“Too much power for dealing with flexible time around carers’ responsibilities tends to lie with immediate manager- there are no systems in place.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

A documented approach also ensures that cases of unfair discrimination against carers are avoided. That is, respondents indicated that in some cases stereotypes about the commitment and capability of employees with caring responsibilities had resulted in overt discrimination.

*“I have seen first hand in the workplace women get passed up for good projects because they are part time or job sharing to raise young children. They are seen as unreliable or not committed.”* Environmental Scientist, Female.

*“Our senior manager said one female applicant could not be considered for role as she was a single parent. He knew there would be child care issues.”* Geoscientist, Female.

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Define and communicate what a commitment to workplace flexibility means for the organisation**
- **Develop a set of criteria against which requests for flexibility will be considered**
- **Require managers to document how they respond to requests for flexibility**
- **Audit documentation on flexible work practices against corporate policy**
- **Regularly review and update both the corporate policy and criteria**

#### ***ii. Develop tools for transparent consideration of flexible work arrangements***

Respondents indicated that not all roles offered equal scope for flexibility. For example, many respondents felt that site-based duties were less amenable to flexibility than city based roles, particularly where duties were supervisory in nature.

However, a large number of respondents in both site-based and city roles indicated that there were aspects of their roles that were amenable to work practices such as part-time, job share or working from home. Moreover these opportunities were increasing due to increased use of ICT (Information Communication Technologies), that is: faster internet connections, networked computers in the home, remote controls and automation.

*“A lot of PC based work, which can allow working from home, and/or flexible start/end hours can be done on any given day of the week.”* Mining Engineer, Male.

*“Improved IT solutions with faster broadband connections, notebooks and PDA phones can help in some cases. However, face to face customer contact is impacted.”* Accountant, Female.

*“Some of my role could be done remotely from home. E.g., developing plans, strategy, presentations, flowcharts etc.”* Management, Female.

Respondents indicated that separating out what is feasible could prove challenging:

*“Most professional roles can be partitioned into “must be at work” versus “can be done anywhere” (lots of time we work at home now). It is just coming to an agreeable method of*

*how and a pay scheme that needs to be sorted, where employers trust enough to let it happen.”* Management, Male.

It was suggested that a set of case studies for various roles would be beneficial for companies seeking to implement workplace flexibility; so that employees did not have to continually ‘reinvent the wheel’.

*“It’s often too hard for companies to come up with special arrangements and they fear that everyone will want it. Credible, workable examples and education and impact stories will help show them its good business and not too hard.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

A template or pro forma for assessing flexible work proposals may also be useful. The document should require that the employee identify and address any organisational risks associated with the arrangement prior to making the request. It should also outline the employee’s obligations with respect to the agreement. Having a systematic process in place would aid dialogue, and also be useful in justifying why requests were supported, denied or varied.

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Develop and promulgate a set of worked, credible case studies of flexible work arrangements for key roles**
- **Develop a pro forma or template for negotiating flexible work arrangements that identifies and addresses risks and outlines obligations**
- **Regularly review flexibility arrangements**

#### ***iii. Implement a Paid Parental Leave Policy***

Paid parental leave policies are highly variable between organisations in the mining industry. A large number of respondents indicated that a company-supported paid parental scheme is important both for financial reasons, in terms of foregone income and super contribution, but also in signalling that having a child is in fact a legitimate activity for an employee to undertake

*“More paid maternity leave would make this the norm and accepted amount of time for women to take off work when having a baby. This incentive would also make mothers feel more valued and more comfortable returning to work.”* Management, Female.

Respondents generally indicated that schemes of the kind currently under contemplation (minimum wage) by the Government had significant symbolic importance, but probably had limited relevance to the issues faced by carers for newborns in the mining industry given the high pay scales.

Many respondents indicated that greater access to paid parental leave schemes at full salary across a reasonable time frame for carers would aid retention and engagement. Increased paid parental leave, both in terms of duration and pay levels, was seen as important both from the standpoint of equity, and participation. A number of respondents also stated that parental leave should be accessible by males and females equally to give the family options and flexibility in allocating primary care responsibilities.

*“There should be equal paid paternity and maternity leave! A lot of Dads would like to spend time at home caring for a child but it is not financially viable as they are not entitled to pay. So Mum stays at home and Dad goes to work. This leaves an unhappy Dad who would like to*

*spend more time with his child and possibly an unhappy Mum who would like to get back into the work place.”* Management, Male.

*“I did not have paid maternity leave available to me for either of my two children. I was unable to maintain super payments during this time which means I had to downgrade my super.”* Academic, Female.

In general, members felt that view that the extent and level of a paid parental leave policy should be up to employers; they did not want to see anything further than minimal ‘safety net’ arrangements imposed by Government. In particular, some members expressed the view that mandating a scheme at full salary to be funded by the company could lead to a backlash against hiring women or impose excessive costs on some companies depending on their size etc.

That is, generally members felt that paid parental leave would be of benefit, but that the arrangements should be determined by companies as part of their attraction and retention strategy.

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Implement a company sponsored paid parental leave scheme at full salary across a reasonable time frame**
- **Ensure that paid parental leave is available to primary carer irrespective of gender**

#### ***iv. Design a ‘return to work’ policy for new parents***

A significant number of female respondents reported negative experiences returning to work after parental leave. The most commonly reported scenario was being refused the opportunity to return to the previous role on a part-time basis, or being offered a part-time role at significantly lower status than that previously performed.

*“I had to leave my position as a mining engineer with a large mining corporation to have a baby. The company I worked for refused to promote me because I was pregnant and the day I finished work they promoted a male colleague with less experience. The company would not consider me working flexible hours except those conditions in my terms of contract. There is no flexibility or fair promotion for working mums with this large mining company.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

*“I asked for PT work temporary after returning from maternity leave. Despite having been there for 10 years, I was refused. I didn’t make a big deal of it but I applied for a transfer off site and the mine took over 2 years to place a person in my role. I still provide technical support to them as they can’t cover all the technical aspects...”* Mining Engineer, Female.

*“My wife has had to resign from a senior role to have children. There were very limited opportunities to return to her senior role.”* Geoscientist, Male.

*“I was a supervisor in my last position and I only took not even 1 full year off, and I am back at starting at the bottom of the career ladder again as I have children to look after.”* Environmental Scientist, Female.

Professional women without children expressed significant anxiety over how their employer would manage their need for flexibility if they decided to have children.

*“I hope that when I decide to have a family and return to work that choices are available to ensure I can balance my family and work commitments. I expect this won’t be an easy thing to do.”* Safety Advisor, Female.

The responses above indicate that returning to work after maternity is a key stumbling block for many women, and a corporate commitment to retention of carers following extended parental leave may be highly beneficial.

Such a policy may include an explicit commitment to assess requests for flexibility on their merit and seeking to employ the person at equivalent level if the request cannot be met. Having a formal policy in place and a systematic approach may also assist in overcoming actual and perceived bias against parents of newborns.

The company should also investigate 'on ramps' for keeping the employee engaged, such as continuing to involve the person on leave in social functions etc whilst they are away, and giving them the opportunity to conduct some set tasks from home - escalate their participation gradually.

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Put in place a corporate policy aimed at retention of employees following parental leave**
- **Ensure a transparent system for considering requests for flexibility for following extended parental leave is in place**
- **Where a request for flexibility cannot be accommodated in the previous role, seek to find a role for the employee that is at an equivalent level of responsibility**
- **Put in place structured arrangements for maintaining contact with the employee whilst on leave, incorporating opportunities for both social and work participation**
- **Ensure that a return to work plan is negotiated with employees prior to commencing parental leave**

#### ***v. Address barriers to effective implementation of workplace flexibility***

Many respondents indicated that people with significant caring responsibilities were often unfairly viewed as less capable and committed by their colleagues in the workplace. This was especially true of those people who worked non-standard hours. Such translated into reduced opportunities for advancement and professional development, and lower job security.

*"[If you have caring responsibilities] you are definitely sidelined and not seen as "reliable" or able to do necessary work/trips etc. Especially if part time, you have little chance of promotion. Environmental Scientist, Female.*

*"In the workplace, "part-timer" has become a derogatory term - used to indicate that some is lazy and not pulling their weight." Geoscientist, Female.*

*"My professional development opportunities appear to be "on hold" whilst I work part time to care for my child. No prospects of promotion etc." Lawyer, Female.*

Some professionals indicated that they utilised flexible work arrangements but kept them secret from their employer to avoid the associated negative perceptions.

*"I help my wife by occasionally dropping children at school or occasionally pick up children or attend school for important events. The attitude of my peers means I almost feel guilty by coming into work late or going home early. I prefer not to even tell my boss when there will be a late start." Metallurgist, Male.*

*"I was told to consider getting a full time carer when I requested one day's carers leave. Next time I will just take a sick day to avoid all the hassle."* Accountant, Female.

A practical issue that was raised repeatedly as a barrier to flexibility was inconvenient scheduling of meeting times.

*"Male managers who have a partner at home looking after the kids call meetings for 4.30pm-5pm when many female employees need to leave to pick up their kids before child care centres shut."* Accountant, Female.

Another practical issue that was raised was the failure to adjust salaries for additional hours worked by employees who were subject to a part time schedule.

*"I get paid for 3 days a week and work 5!"* Professional, Female.

Some organisations were overcoming this by adjusting pay weekly on a per-hour basis.

*"A flexible work week has been introduced to allow people to work the hours they need each week, when it suits them best. This program also allows people to work longer hours to get extra days off."* Geoscientist, Male.

In order to be effective a commitment to flexibility needs to go beyond corporate commitment and practice and be viewed as legitimate amongst staff. If staff accessing flexible work practices feel that they are unfairly discriminated against, continually come up against practical barriers that could be easily addressed and are not being remunerated appropriately, they are unlikely to remain engaged. Finding an appropriate balance that does not create resentment amongst staff without caring responsibilities is a major challenge for employers and managers that requires both a strategic and consultative.

## **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Ensuring that the true value of workplace flexibility i.e. impact on attraction, skill retention, engagement and motivation is understood**
- **Engage employees in discussion of practical barriers to effective functioning of flexible work practices**
- **Implement a policy of holding key meetings at times that are compatible with team members caring responsibilities, where this is workable**
- **Ensure that salary arrangements for employees accessing flexible work practices can be adjusted for additional hours during peak times**

### ***vi. Support male employees to exercise choice in their approach to caring responsibilities***

According to the survey, approximately 10% of male respondents are *primary carers* for a child or elderly relative and approximately 50% *provide care* for a child or elderly relative.

A number of male respondents made the point that men are increasingly taking on a more significant caring role for their children, and that the impact is not recognised by the workplace.

*"The industry needs to recognise that fathers can be impacted in the same way as females - emotionally and physically (tiredness etc of night feeds etc) when caring for children."*

*Acknowledge the fact that many fathers now shoulder as much responsibility for caring and raising children as mothers do.” Management, Male.*

Consequently, a large number of respondents indicated that flexible work arrangements should be available equally to men and women.

A significant number of respondents indicated that paternity leave arrangements at their company were inadequate for attending to responsibilities (i.e. only one week).

Some respondents also suggested that fathers should have access to paid paternity parental leave. That is, just as a maternity leave recognises that having children is a legitimate activity for a female employee to undertake, paternity leave should recognise the legitimacy of the responsibilities associated with being a secondary carer.

*“Paternity leave should be more important to employers and treated as a right not a privilege.” Mining Engineer, Male.*

The pressures on new fathers adjusting to caring responsibilities was also raised repeatedly by respondents, who cited that flexibility would assist with issues such as fatigue, partner expectations and a greater desire for engagement with their child.

*“Let them start work at 9:30am after sleepless nights spend bum wiping and getting the kids fed in the morning.” Geoscientist, Male.*

*“Allow some work from home time so they can support mother e.g. in first trips to day care, attending appointments, etc. Make this clear up front when baby is being expected not afterwards. Be aware of fatigue issues related to not getting enough sleep. A bit of trust goes a long way.” Geoscientist, Female.*

Both male and female respondents also raised the need for flexibility to accommodate shared care arrangements where the partner worked. Many male respondents indicated that flexibility was particularly important whilst the primary carer was in the process of re-entering the workforce.

*“Companies should encourage flexible working arrangements to allow shared caring responsibilities. This is a mindset that many senior managers can't fathom as they are baby boomers or builders and they don't believe that it's the father's job to get involved in this area. Progressive employers with a younger corporate group recognise traditional working arrangements don't suit all young families,” Metallurgist, Male.*

*“Provide fathers with more flexible time so if the mother wants to go to work at least one day a week, give the father an opportunity to work 4 out of 5 days. We are currently trying this for a father we have in our office. I think both men and women should receive the same flexibility.” Management, Female.*

*“If female professional needs to go away (additional time in travel) then partner could drop a few hours per day to care for children as there is no day care outside of normal hours.” Finance, Female.*

Putting in place a policy that supports flexible work arrangements for fathers is only part of the story. A number of respondents indicated that there was a strong cultural bias against fathers accessing flexible work options.

*“Industry needs to allow fathers to take carer's/paternity leave without the unspoken disapproval that is often present.” Management, Male.*

*“The assumption in the culture (of the industry and the country) that while it is acceptable for a woman to have dual responsibilities of family and work, if a man wishes to do similar they have the belief (rightly or wrongly) their career will be impacted more than their female partner's if they take paternity leave, leave early to pick the kids up etc.”* Geoscientist, Female.

Some respondents indicated that proactive encouragement and communication with male staff over the legitimacy of taking time to attend to caring responsibilities is necessary to address these cultural issues.

*“Companies should actively promote access to HR or organisational equivalent for fathers to negotiate requirements for their caring responsibilities. Provide some options to accommodate caring responsibilities.”* Geoscientist, Male.

*“We need to offer career guidance and career opportunities for fathers so they can strike the right mix of quality time spent with family.”* Metallurgist, Male.

Several respondents also indicated that greater support should be available to men in the industry who were juggling caring responsibilities with demanding careers, particularly where they are working FIFO.

*“Industry should provide support networks for fathers similar to what is available for women in mining. Fathers are less likely to seek support than women and I know of a number of instances where these men are required to give up opportunities to ensure the family remains intact. I'd like to see a number of programs to bring the children and families into the work force. Allowing children to visit sites twice a year on the company, Family support networks...the list is as long as our imagination and desire to bring these things to fruition.”* Mining Engineer, Male

## **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Ensure that flexible work policies are equally available to male and female employees**
- **Proactively promote flexible work arrangements equally to men**
- **Implement a policy of paid paternity leave >two weeks**
- **Discuss possible impacts and flexibility requirements prior to paternity leave**
- **Engage male staff in dialogue regarding their need for flexibility**

### **vii. Support access to quality and affordable child care for employees**

Lack of access to suitable childcare was the most frequently cited barrier to equitable participation in the workforce by people with caring responsibilities. The main issues were the shortage of places in regional centres, the poor quality of child care available, and the fact that few centres operated at times that were compatible with mining rosters.

*“There is a huge undersupply in my town, with a very long waiting list for the available positions. Anyone who was relying on one and a half or two salaries would have a very hard time living in this mining town after starting a family- they would probably need to leave.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

*“My husband and I currently work shifts at work so one of us is always home to look after our two children under 2. We cannot find a child care that is flexible and able to accommodate all our needs. They all want just 5 day a week sign ups...no variation.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

A number of respondents indicated that they or their partner were unable to return to the workforce because of lack of child care.

*"There is no child care available; hence we are a single income family by default. The Government can fudge the numbers however they want, there is a lack of child care places in the areas where they are required and at the times they are required."* Male, Geoscientist.

Respondents also indicated that they had been unable to secure candidates for roles because of the lack of child care in the region.

*"The last two female candidates I offered work to identified [the lack of child care] as a key to declining the job. One now works for a consultancy in a capital city and costs me 3.5 times what she would have if employed directly."* Mining Engineer, Male.

*"..We had a highly talented female manager who wanted to come back after having a baby, but could not access childcare in her location. The waiting list was over 18 months long."* Management, Male.

Given the lack of child care options available at times that were compatible with mining rosters, for many respondents the only option available was a nanny.

*"The more responsibility or hours you work, you almost immediately require nannies plus/minus institutional care if available. This is extremely expensive and many mid-level roles do not pay enough to justify the child care costs. Thus we are stuck in lower level jobs, and it's even tougher to break through that mid-tier of management/responsibility."* Consultant, Female.

*"Women still leave mid 30s as it is very hard to have a family and keep working without family support and lack of childcare to fit in with rosters...costs of nannies are more than take home salary and women get frustrated at lack of opportunity/support and disengage."* Mining Engineer, Female.

*"I choose to employ a nanny in my own home to care for my children...as this fits my needs for flexibility and care outside of traditional office hours. Cost is significantly more than formal childcare...Not everyone would make the decisions I have to keep working and this contributes to the drop out of women from the industry."* Environmental Scientist, Female.

For women who are the primary carer for a child, the lack of childcare options is clearly adversely impacting their equitable participation in the mining industry. Lack of child care options can effectively lock a woman into a more limited career trajectory, particularly if it delays her return, does not provide her with any flexibility to meet the requirements of her role, or alternatively prevents her from returning to a career in mining altogether.

*"The monthly costs associated with quality childcare for my infant / toddler exceed the repayments of a \$400,000 mortgage based on current rates...it is barely worth my while to continue working."* Management, Female.

*"If my husband had not been prepared to take on the carer role for our children I would have left the industry. As is, it has hurt us financially and has been extremely difficult socially."* Management, Female.

It is clear that lack of quality, affordable child care that is compatible with mine rosters is inhibiting both attraction and retention, as well as impacting equitable participation by the workforce. The extent to which companies can support the provision of child care will vary from circumstance to circumstance, and should be weighed up as part of the overall attraction and retention, and diversity policy. Some of the strategies that can be employed are listed below.

The role of Government policy on child care provision is discussed in Section 5 below.

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Ensure that HR Officers are across child care options and costs in the area and can advise if this comes up as a recruitment/retention issue**
- **Enter into partnership arrangements with child care centres or family day care providers for centres compatible with mining rosters**
- **Operate a child care centre for company employees**
- **Join with other employers in the area to operate a child care centre for employees**
- **Offer to subsidise employee child care**

### **d) SOLUTIONS Issues that affect people in roles that employ 'softer' skills (both males and females)**

Responses pertaining to issues that affect people in roles that employ 'softer skills' were analysed for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, with a view to identifying solutions. The following solutions were distilled from analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

#### ***i. Ensure that there is appropriate valuation of all roles***

Respondents commented that hard engineering roles tend to be valued more than research, specialist technical roles, and roles requiring soft skills. This was regardless of whether the role was located at head office and or site based. As males tended to be clustered in hard engineering roles whereas women were more likely to be in science based roles and roles that had a greater planning or administrative focus, this can translate into lower average salaries for females within a mining organisation.

It was pointed out by some that to some extent the higher salaries for hard engineering roles could to some extent be correlated with the lack of flexibility inherent in these roles.

*"Often senior women are in HR or service style functions and men are in operational functions...I am a Business Improvement Manager, I would not expect the same remuneration as a site based Plant Manager even with same experience and qualifications. This is sometimes driven by family requirements as the "softer" roles generally provide more flexibility."* Management, Female.

Other respondents commented that roles that were not directly related to production were not valued fully, and this was due to misconception that the roles entailed a lower level of complexity, even though this was not the case.

*"My job title does not suggest that I supervise people and have to do all the "people related" duties such as performance reviews. Others with the title of supervisor are 2 job levels higher. Administration is often considered less important or menial easy work. This is at a number of companies, not particular to this one."* Management, Female.

*"Secretarial duties are complex & demanding but very underrated. A miner driving trucks after 3 yrs with the company earns a base salary of \$94,373 for 44hr week of perm dayshift while a female secretary also called administration assistant with even 20yrs with the company & doing complex & demanding physical & intellectual work will earn only of a base of \$60,000 which = \$34,373 less money."* Mining Surveyor, Male.

*“[There are] discrepancies in pay scales between different science disciplines. Perception that some disciplines are of greater production benefit than others and therefore warrant greater remuneration.”* Environmental Scientist, Female.

A more structured approach to skill levels and pay bands, employing standards criteria across engineering and non engineering roles would be useful in assessing the actual value and complexity of a role. This would allow perceived or actual bias relating to remuneration of these roles to be addressed.

Another issue that was raised was that as head office or service roles could not always be tied as obviously to increased profitability of the business, the contribution of these roles was not always adequately recognised in the distribution of ‘bonus’ type payments.

*“The majority of female employees, particularly at higher levels, are in office-based roles. Therefore they miss out on site allowances and potentially shift allowances. In our company, we have a split between superintendents (level 2) and specialists (level 2). Superintendents will be paid more, their bonuses are more easily tied to production, and they can more easily show business benefit. Most superintendents are men; they’re working in engineering roles on site.*

### **SOLUTIONS- Options for Companies**

- **Implement a systematic approach to skill levels and pay bands, which is consistent across all disciplines and both production and non production based roles**
- **Review incentive arrangements to ensure appropriate measures are in place to recognise a significant contribution for all types of roles**

## 5. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT POLICIES

This section of the analysis looks at the actual and potential impact of Government support policies aimed at increasing equitable participation in the workforce.

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of impact that each of the below policies would have on gender equity:

- Paid parental leave
- Tax deductibility of work related child care expenses
- Fringe Benefits Tax removed from employer sponsored child-care
- Greater investment in Government accreditation of child-care workers
- Education programs aimed at employers to inform on gender equity, flexible work arrangements and the gender pay gap
- Education programs aimed at employers to inform on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave

The policies could be ranked as having significant impact; some impact; no impact; don't know; or negative impact. The results appear below:

	<b>Significant impact %</b>	<b>Some impact %</b>	<b>No impact %</b>	<b>Don't know %</b>	<b>Negative impact %</b>	<b>#</b>
Paid parental leave (14 weeks)	<b>41.8 (175)</b>	37.2 (156)	8.8 (37)	5.3 (22)	6.9 (29)	419
Tax deductibility of work related child care expenses	<b>52.9 (222)</b>	36.9 (155)	6.2 (26)	3.3 (14)	0.7 (3)	420
Fringe benefits tax removed on employer sponsored child care	<b>45.3 (189)</b>	34.8 (145)	8.4 (35)	9.8 (41)	1.7 (7)	417
Greater investment in government training and accreditation of child care workers	26.1 (109)	<b>42.3 (177)</b>	21.1 (88)	10.0 (42)	0.5 (2)	418
Education programs aimed at employers to inform on gender equity, flexible work arrangements and the pay gap	28.6 (120)	<b>46.8 (196)</b>	15.8 (66)	5.5 (23)	3.3 (14)	419
Education programs aimed at employers to inform on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave	27.1 (114)	<b>50.0 (210)</b>	14.5 (61)	6.2 (26)	2.1 (9)	420

Respondents were also asked a range of qualitative questions about the impact of different policies. The recommendations below were derived from analysing both the qualitative and quantitative data.

## **a) RECOMMENDATIONS for Government**

### ***i. Implement tax deductibility of work related carer expense***

According to the quantitative responses, policies aimed at tax deductibility of work related carer responses were considered have the biggest impact on gender equity. In particular 52.9% of respondents' tax deductibility of child care indicated that this would have a significant impact, and 89.9% indicated that it would have a positive impact.

Qualitatively, a number of respondents viewed the high costs of child care as a major inhibitor to equitable participation in the mining workforce for both male and female carers.

*"I believe that full tax deductibility of child care expenses (at least for the parent who earns the least amount of income) would have the most significant impact on participation of women in the labour force."* Male, Mining Engineer

*"The monthly costs associated with quality childcare for my infant/toddler exceed the repayments of a \$400,000 mortgage based on current rates. As my earnings fall (just) over the government assistance threshold - it is barely worth my while to continue working."* Female, Management

Currently, childcare expenses are not tax deductible except by way of salary sacrifice, which is available only to employers who run their own child care centres on their own premises. Meanwhile existing Child Care Rebate and Benefit are capped at low levels \$7,500 and are not strongly linked to workforce participation. The limited help on offer to parents is insufficient in light of the major expenses associated with what is frequently the only child care option for a professional working a mining roster: in home care (see section D. ii. above).

Tax deductibility of child care would recognise that this is a necessary cost of working. The average contribution in terms of GDP of an employee in the mining sector is \$337,000 compared with an average for the economy per employee of \$72,600. Giving some of the earnings of professionals in the mining sector and other professions with non standard hours back to them would potentially have a significant impact on productivity.

## **Recommendations for Government**

- **Implement tax deductibility of child care and elderly care costs**

### ***ii. Extend Fringe Benefits Tax Exemption to all employer-sponsored child care***

Under current tax law, an employer can only claim a Fringe Benefits Tax Exemption on child care assistance provided to the employee if they run a child care centre. According to quantitative responses to the survey, 80% of respondents thought that extending the tax exemption to all employer sponsored child care would have a positive impact on gender equity, with 45.3% indicating that it would have a significant impact.

In the qualitative sections of the survey, the current policy was criticised by both employees and employers as tying the hands of employers who wanted to assist employees with child care costs. Providing business with more options for assistance was also seen as critical to allow women to return to work earlier.

*“Allowing companies to provide or assist in the provision of child care can allow women wanting to further their careers to return to work earlier.”* Management, Female

*“I choose to employ a nanny in my own home to care for my children. I can gain no tax benefits or government assistance for this. I chose this path as fits my needs for flexibility and care outside of traditional office hours. Cost is significantly more than formal childcare. If I had the children in my office, with the same carer, I would be able to realise some government rebates. This system makes no sense. I chose to accept these costs as it means I can keep running my business successfully. Given this then means I can continue to employ about 20 other people, pay large amounts of personal and business related taxes, I think there should be some recognition of alternate methods of childcare other than a formal centre. Not everyone would make the decisions I have to keep working and this contributes to the drop out of women from the industry.”* Environmental Scientist, Female

For mining companies, the risks and liabilities of running a child care centre, along with the fact of limited places and the fact that most parents want to choose their own providers, makes running a child care centre themselves an unattractive prospect. The companies that are most likely to take up the narrow option are most likely to be those that already have high female participation rates.

The policy has been criticised by a range of other employer groups, from financial services firms such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers, who face high costs of inner city child care, as well as groups such as the WA Police and Defence, who face similar challenges in running a child care centre to the mining industry, in terms of non standard hours and low female numbers.

#### **Recommendation to Government:**

- **Extend Fringe Benefits Tax Exemption to all employer sponsored child care costs, not just for employer-run child care centres**

#### ***iii. Ensure there is access to quality child care catering to shift work in rural and regional areas***

A large number of respondents commented on the lack of child care centres generally in remote towns, and the complete lack of availability of group child care outside of standard working hours. This was a brake on participation of both parents in mining towns, where shift work was often the norm. It also was seen to affect retention, as people left due to lack of child care.

*“...The entire town have experienced difficulties in accessing child care full stop. Even before you cover the aspects of quality and affordability, in a town of 8000 people, the majority of which young families, there is only one child care centre of 30 places, 6 of which are only available for children under 2. The remainder is 'family day care' where demand well and truly outstrips supply.”* Geoscientist, Female.

*“I left the industry whilst my children were young as there was no child care available in the mining town in which I was living and only returned to work when they were all at school.”* Geoscientist, Female.

*“Mining roles are typically away from child care locations and involve unusual hours.”* Geoscientist, Male.

*“The government can fudge the numbers however they want, there is a lack of child care places in the areas where they are required at times when they are required.”* Geoscientist, Male.

The Federal Government has committed to increasing child care centres. It is hoped that particular attention is paid to remote and regional areas with a shortage of places, and experiencing skills shortages, such as mining towns, where demand is expected to grow. It is also critical that a ‘one-size-fits’ all approach based on the Mon-Fri, 9-5 work week paradigm is not assumed for mining towns, as this is entirely at odds with the real child care needs of the town.

### **Recommendations for Government**

- **Child care centres in remote and regional areas, particularly those facing skills shortage and projected growth due to mining industry growth, to be a budget priority**
- **Child care centre operating hours to meet real needs of local industry employees (i.e. shift work)**

#### ***iv. Develop educational resources for companies aimed at increasing equitable participation by men and women in the workforce***

Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that ‘education programs aimed at employers to inform on gender equity, flexible work arrangements and the pay gap’ would have an impact on gender equity, with close to 30% indicating that they thought the impact would be significant.

Analysis of qualitative responses showed there was a prevalent view that a cultural shift was needed before employees could access or benefit from other government or corporate programs aimed at diversity, and that education in the workplace would assist at this. It was also felt that issues of discrimination, equity and work life balance were not issues relating to carers.

*“Education programmes will only have an impact if high levels of management are exposed. Either through their HR advisers or directly. At the end of the day, a woman's childbearing years are few and their lifetime contribution to the industry, in terms of years, is many. This perspective is often lost. We need to look at women in terms of their overall contribution, not the interrupted and sometimes, lower performance years when they are carrying or caring for young children. It should be socially acceptable at work for a woman to take 12 months maternity leave.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

*“It is not the formal processes that are in place, it is the expectations of an employee and the demands on their time that do the damage. You cannot afford not to be there when needed because it is not excused and not forgotten. Cultural change needs to occur. Parental leave etc is adequate.”* Lawyer, Female.

*“Taxes and benefits only benefit women in the industry if they are parents. This does not solve any of the pay inequality facing women in the industry who are not parents, and have not intention of becoming a parent. Forcing employers to confront the gender pay gap will have more impact - awareness programmes will at least get people talking about it.”* Mining Engineer, Female.

### **Recommendations for Government**

- **Develop resources to assist companies to provide education programs aimed at employers to inform on gender equity, flexible work**

**arrangements and the pay gap that are specifically tailored to the minerals sector**

***v. Develop educational resources for companies aimed on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave***

Respondents identified return to work as a particular problem area for the industry. Whilst some companies are ahead of the curve, many others either failed to approach the issue in a consistent way or did not have any particular policy or practice in place. This may be an area where development of resources on leading practice could assist.

*"We offer 12 months maternity leave, paid for 3 months. We also offer part time employment if someone want to return to work in a part time role to try and retain female staff."* Geotechnical Engineer, Male.

*"A proactive approach to enabling females to return to work after maternity leave, i.e. proactively encouraging part time roles that are at the same level as they are currently at, is needed. Many part time roles do not have the same level of responsibility, thus this affects females ability to move up the chain once they return to work."* Geoscientist, Female.

*"Six weeks paid maternity leave is offered, however how the policy is managed and the return to work plan is somewhat tenuous."* Management, Female.

*"Education programs aimed at employers to inform on successful return to work measures for employees on parental leave" is an excellent idea and should be implemented as soon as possible."* Mining Engineer, Female.

As per section 5.v. above, lack of transparency about return to work arrangements and lack of 'on ramps' for parents who have taken leave are a major barrier in the retention of women. Developing resources to assist companies in this area may have a significant impact on gender equity in mining.

**Recommendations to Government**

- **Develop and promote resources to assist companies in negotiating return to work arrangements prior to an employee taking paid parental leave**
- **Develop and promote resources to assist companies in developing 'on ramps' for employees undertaking paid parental leave**

***vi. Implement a Paid Parental Leave policy***

As per section 5.v., respondents indicated that a basic entitlement for a paid parental leave scheme mandated by Government, is important both for financial reasons, in terms of foregone income and super contribution, and in signalling that having a child is in fact a legitimate activity for an employee to undertake.

*"More paid maternity leave would make this the norm and accepted amount of time for women to take off work when having a baby. This incentive would also make mothers feel more valued and more comfortable returning to work."* Management, Female.

Members expressed the importance of ensuring that the scheme was funded from employers collectively, or general social security to ensure that it did not lead to discrimination against women of child-bearing age by employers who are unable to absorb the cost.

## **Recommendations for Government**

- **Implement a paid parental leave policy to be available equally to male and female carers**
- **Ensure that the scheme is paid from a Government fund – either out of general social security or an employer based tax (based on a per person employed formula, NOT per woman or mother)**