

WOMEN IN MINING AND RESOURCES WA SUMMIT

Statement by Minister for Women's Interests

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Women's Interests) [12.14 pm]: I rise to speak about Western Australian women who have carved out careers in the mining industry. Last week I was fortunate enough to attend the tenth annual Women in Mining and Resources WA Summit, which was attended by more than 1 000 people. Women in Mining and Resources WA, an organisation driven by women professionals in the industry and convened by Sabina Shugg—that is Sabina the miner, not Sabina the ballerina; or, as Leigh Sales referred to her on the day, “a bloody good chick”—has held this event annually for the past 10 years to celebrate women in mining and provide a forum for them to build relationships and discuss their experiences. Events and groups like these are particularly important given the low representation of women in our essential resources industry. As of 2016, women made up just 13.7 per cent of the mining workforce, with men making up 86.3 per cent. One of the other initiatives of Women in Mining and Resources WA is its mentor program. It was also encouraging to hear from three women at the summit—two engineers, and a woman who has progressed through the trade ranks—who have participated in the program.

We should all be encouraged by the proactive steps that some of our mining companies are taking to increase the number of women working in the industry. BHP, for example, has made significant progress in achieving a gender balance across the organisation in 2016–17, with an increase of almost three per cent in female employees, particularly as more than one-fifth of BHP's workforce are women. Fortescue Metals Group is also talking the gender equity talk at a leadership level. Rio Tinto and BHP have supported employees affected by family and domestic violence by providing additional leave for victims. Those employees who require immediate help can also access short-term financial assistance and emergency accommodation. This year, these important steps were recognised through Rio Tinto's White Ribbon workplace accreditation and its award in the Excellence in Diversity Programs and Performance category at the 2018 Women in Resources National Awards.

I commend the many women who have taken up careers in the mining industry, and I applaud their commitment to supporting each other across the industry. We need young women in WA to imagine their career opportunities in this important part of our economy.