

MINING WORKFORCE — MENTAL AWARENESS, RESPECT AND SAFETY PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [1.20 pm]: I rise to inform the house about the ongoing work of the whole-of-government mental awareness, respect and safety program initiative that aims to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of workers, particularly women workers, and others in the mining industry. Workplace health and safety is a high priority of the Cook government, and through the delivery of the MARS program initiatives, it continues to provide a platform to enable the outcomes of creating mentally healthy workplaces, building a culture of safety and respect, and preparing for workplace safety in future mining. The MARS program initiatives are designed to foster innovation in health and safety, and establish collaborative work within the sector. These initiatives are often successfully facilitated in conjunction with unions, mining industry associations and peak bodies.

For reference, I highlight some programs that are being delivered. Resourceful Mind is a program for the resources sector co-designed by Lifeline WA in partnership with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. The program, delivered by Lifeline WA, trains workers to become peer supporters known as “minders”. The program’s purposes are to reduce stigma about mental health and encourage people to seek help and support before they reach crisis point, and to create accessible pathways for them to do so. Resourceful Mind is a WorkSafe excellence award winner for 2022.

MATES in Mining is a World Health Organization–recognised best-practice suicide prevention and mental health peer support program for industry. MATES focuses on site training and education to empower workers to manage mental health and suicide within the workforce. MATES also provides individual case management support and a no-cost 24/7 helpline. MATES has facilitated training and awareness programs with a clear focus on small to medium-sized mining companies, and it has been consistently supported through consultation and events hosted by the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies WA.

Respect in Mining is a customised program built upon respectful relationships principles for the Western Australian mining industry. Its aim is to give organisational leaders the skills and tools to build worker relationships that are characterised by nonviolence, equality and mutual respect. Through the program’s resources, guidance is given to increase awareness and knowledge of the gendered drivers of violence, the impacts of gender inequality on the safety and economic security of women, and the impact of gendered division in leadership and decision-making. This program has been developed by the Department of Communities, in conjunction with the support of member organisations of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, and will assist to embed gender equality policies to benefit all workers in the mining sector and focus on equitable safety now and in the future.

This announcement about the MARS program initiatives emphasises the Cook government’s commitment to prioritising the mental health and wellbeing of workers in Western Australia.