

Response to W.A Parliamentary Inquiry into Sexual Harassment Against Women in the FIFO Mining Industry -13/08/2021

The West Australian mining industry is characterised by comparatively low rates of female participation, particularly within mining company boards and leadership positions. Industry gender participation statistics support this position. The direct result of this lack of female participation in management leads to women's views and needs not being taken into consideration and the dominant culture within West Australian mining companies reflects that.

There is no finer example of the lack of inclusion and gender diversity within the W.A mining industry than at the annual Diggers and Dealers conference held in Kalgoorlie where there is routinely a few female speakers, at best, in the main speaking group of approximately fifty. FMG CEO, Elizabeth Gaines, who presented at the Diggers and Dealers conference in 2020 drew attention to this at the time and it was subsequently widely reported in the media. I expressed a similar sentiment in an article published in the Kalgoorlie Miner newspaper on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020, see attached.

In my 15 years experience in the mining industry the majority of which has been spent in a FIFO capacity, I have encountered little consideration of the prevalence, nature, outcomes and reporting of sexual harassment in FIFO workplaces by the W.A mining industry. My ongoing participation in mine site morning toolbox meetings, managers and site-wide meetings and Health Safety and Environment meetings has led me to reach this conclusion. Whilst most W.A. mining companies do have sexual harassment policies, codes of conduct and the like in place, often these policies are not well embedded within company cultures, adhered to and lived by. This is reflected in the toleration of sexual harassment and the associated under-reporting of it, serious examples of which have been raised by the W.A media in recent times. There are industry wide issues on mine sites in relation to the comparatively easy access to room keys by mine site personnel and it is common practice for rooms to be accessed without the occupiers knowledge or permission. This presents a clear security concern for many personnel, particularly females, in a FIFO workforce where they are underrepresented. Women working on mine sites need to be consulted and proactively engaged with so these issues are clearly captured and addressed. Without it women are leaving the industry and also FIFO operations.

Over the years I have spent employed within health, safety and environment functions in a FIFO capacity, I have found when companies have weak drug and alcohol policies in place they generally have drug and alcohol related

issues existing within their workforce. The typical focus of many W.A mining industry drug and alcohol policies is to stop personnel from coming to work the next day under the influence of alcohol as opposed to the prevention of sexual harassment or unsociable behaviour. The more recent widespread adoption of drug and alcohol policies that incorporate capping, or reducing the cap, of the number of drinks and also a reduction in the strength of alcohol available goes some way to addressing this oversight.

In regards to recruitment practices whilst many companies have adopted targets to increase the number of females in their workforce, it is also commonplace for recruitment to take place outside of formalised recruitment processes that are often designed to take gender into consideration. This bypassing of formalised recruitment practices perpetuates low rates of female participation in the W.A mining industry. In regards to safety and recruitment practices, it is typically not well communicated to the FIFO workforce what company policies are in relation to employment of individuals with criminal records and whether that may present a security threat, particularly to women. It is more difficult for a female to take responsibility for the effective management of her own safety if she is unaware if there is any elevated security risk due to personnel with criminal backgrounds being employed or otherwise. In the course of my employment at some sites I have found out I am working directly with people with a criminal backgrounds, which I am not necessarily opposed to, but I would like to know that I am not being placed in a position of working with a person with a specific kind of criminal background that may present a security risk.

Although I have worked with many fine people in my fifteen years in the W.A mining industry and generally had a positive experience, I am not at all surprised there is now a W.A Parliamentary Inquiry into sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry. The culture created by the low rates of female participation in the W.A mining industry, particularly on company boards and within leadership ranks, invites it so.

## Female participation at Diggers & Dealers far too low

### LETTER

What initiatives are the companies that present at the Diggers & Dealers conference and the Diggers & Dealers management undertaking to overcome the extremely low female representation both in the key speaker group and the

attendee group at the 2020 Diggers & Dealers event?

While there have been efforts to increase the female participation at Diggers & Dealers, the ongoing levels of female participation remain far too low and serve as an advertisement to those women already employed in the WA mining industry and those

considering joining it that mining is not inclusive and welcoming of women, particularly in leadership positions.

The 2019 Diggers & Dealers main speakers line-up consisted of just three female speakers in a group of 51.

In 2017, there was only one female speaker in a total of 51

speakers. Is Diggers & Dealers really serious about fostering further investment in the WA mining industry?

Start by getting improved representation of the female half of the population at Diggers & Dealers. They have wallets and make investments, too.

**Kathryn Forrest,**