



# MEDIA RELEASE

## MINERALS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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### NATIONAL WOMEN AND MINING SYMPOSIUM – A WORLD FIRST

In a world first, the Minerals Council of Australia and Federal Government today held the Inaugural Women and Mining Symposium as a critical input to the development of a five year strategic agenda to increase the participation of women in the minerals industry.

“The business case for increasing the numbers of women working in the minerals industry is compelling at any time, let alone when there is – as now – an acute and prospective chronic people shortage in our industry, most notably in the professions and trades. In addition to the business case, the industry considers it is simply the right thing to do”, Minerals Council Chief Executive Mr Mitchell H Hooke said today, as he opened the Symposium.

The Hon Julie Bishop, MP, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Women’s Issues delivered the keynote address at the Symposium, launching a new report: *Unearthing New Resources - attracting and retaining women in the Australian minerals industry*.

The report was commissioned by the Minerals Council of Australia and the Australian Government’s Office for Women and prepared by the Women in Social and Economic Research at Curtin University and the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland.

The report makes a number of recommendations, key among them, that the industry:

- demonstrate stronger leadership regarding women’s participation in the industry;
- address the negative image held by prospective women employees through a range of attraction strategies;
- establish a comprehensive university program to facilitate transition from education to employment;
- review recruitment strategies to increase female applicants across all categories of professional disciplines;
- implement operational systems/processes to directly address identified gaps in workforce management for gender diversity;
- implement “special measures”, such as dedicated mentoring, to assist in the attraction and retention of Indigenous women;
- improve current work practices in relation to flexibility in rostering and the provision of part-time career opportunities;
- improve current work environments from a quality of life perspective;
- address the strong masculine culture through awareness raising and effective senior leadership;
- support all employees to achieve a balance between work and family commitments;
- provide a range of initiatives aimed at developing women’s careers.

The Symposium is the first event of a busy week of activities during *Minerals Week 07*, which is designed to showcase the Australian minerals industry’s strategic direction and achievements as well as to engage with key opinion leaders and stakeholders in the industry.

“The Inaugural Symposium is the culmination of the MCA’s Women and Mining Dialogue which was established in 2004 to identify and address the key structural and cultural barriers limiting the participation of women in the minerals industry and to examine how best to optimise the social and economic benefits of the industry’s activities to women in the communities in which we operate”, Mr Hooke told the Symposium.

In promoting the business case for increased participation of women in the minerals industry, Mr Hooke said: “the statistics are stark – women comprise 18 percent of the minerals industry workforce, compared with a national participation rate of 45 percent. Women represent 3 percent of all employees at mine sites and minerals processing operations and Indigenous women represent 12 percent of all Indigenous employees”.

“As an industry we can increase the gender and cultural diversity of our workforce if we improve the methods we use to engage women in operational decision making, create a working environment that is non-discriminatory and that values diversity and develop structures to maximise the community development benefits to women resulting from mining activities”, Mr Hooke said.

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