

'Not acceptable': Women in mining speak out against sexual harassment and discrimination

Story by By business reporter Rachel Pupazzoni • 1w

MARKETS TODAY ...

XJO ▲ +0.09%

XAO ▲ +0.14%

AUD/USD ▲ +0.53%



Microsoft Start

171

Search the web



© Provided by ABC Business

The spotlight is shining brightly on the mining sector, as a growing chorus of women speak out against gendered discrimination, bullying, a lack of opportunity and, at the extreme end, sexual harassment and assault.

Convicted perpetrators are being sent to jail, mining companies are investigating their workplaces and governments are tabling reports as the sector, still dominated by men, tries to clean up its act.

Women across different facets of the resources workforce and at different levels of their careers want the mistreatment to stop and for more career opportunities to open up.

These are some of their stories.

'If it happened to me today, I wouldn't stand for it'

Camilla Golding was sexually harassed in her graduate year.

"This was a long time ago, and I was really young and I didn't do anything about it at the time," she says.

Ms Golding now works as a corporate geologist at Lefroy Exploration, with big plans for her future in the resources sector.

"In five to 10 years I see myself in a senior management position or an executive position," she tells ABC News.

"I'm interested in business development, looking at opportunities to grow and expand a company."

While her early experience in the mining sector was marred, she hopes more women will share their story to help change the industry.

"I think not enough women speak up about incidents that have happened to them and I think it's more prevalent than what's even come out in the latest parliamentary inquiry," she says.

"More people are coming out, they're being more open, but I don't think it's yet quite a safe space.

"Otherwise, we would see more women attracted to, and we'd see more women who are retained within, the industry, and the numbers suggest otherwise."

'This is not acceptable to us'

Rowena Smith has been in the mining game for 30 years.

She's at the top of her field, as chief executive officer for Australian Strategic Materials.

Gender-based discrimination has been part of the industry her entire career.

"I certainly think that was something I was very aware of in the first 15 years of my career," she says.

"I did an enormous amount of work supporting women through investigations, and supporting companies that I worked in, in developing policies and systems to be able to support women who were very much in the minority and very vulnerable in those early years.

"My own personal experience, really hasn't been coloured by that in the last decade.

"So it's just been so disappointing when you hear that it is actually still the lived experience for so many women through the industry."

She tells ABC News that some of the behaviour still occurring at mine sites across the country simply has to stop.

Protect Your Logins w/ YubiKey - Minimize Cyber Risk w/ YubiKey

Ad Yubico Group



"This is not acceptable to us, this is not how we as an industry want to show up, this is not how we as teams want to show up, and that we lead that change from the top."

'It can be a bit daunting sometimes to be surrounded by only men'

Narrelle Marriott is the general manager of process development at Hastings Technology Metals.

She considers herself lucky.

"I've had a lot of really supportive bosses that have taken me under their wing and looked out for me," she tells ABC News.

"I've never really struggled, I guess, as a female in the industry, that's dominated by men.

"You know, it can be a bit daunting sometimes to be surrounded by only men," she adds.

"In the last three to five years I'm seeing some amazing female leaders, some really visible people and they're just getting the job done and doing a really good job.

"I've also had some amazing sponsors and some great support from others in the industry, and that's males and females and that's made a huge difference to just how I feel about myself in my career and the opportunities that I see for myself now that I have that support behind me.

"I think maybe that's what's been lacking, is not having that sponsorship from within to push women up."

She hopes the conversations about how a woman's gender in the mining sector can impact her experience, leads to meaningful change.

"It has been amazing that people have brought forward their stories because it's hard to talk about some of the things that have happened.

"It's brought everything out into the light and we need to learn from it and make the mining industry, as well as across all of society, a more fair and equal and welcoming place for everyone."

'We have actually just turned a blind eye and accepted it'

Research geologist at Medallion Metals, Claire Edwards, is still waiting for meaningful change for women in mining.

She says many people are worried about what to say or do with their colleagues.

"I think we're completely tongue tied, both genders are tongue tied, and we actually don't know how to respond."

But she wants to keep the conversation going.

"The attention it's garnered, I think it's great, because if it starts some positive conversations, that's awesome.

"I think for a long time, we have actually just turned a blind eye and accepted it."

While Ms Edwards says she doesn't feel she's been attacked or harassed, there's been plenty of inappropriate language.

"I've certainly had innuendo, I've had rude comments," she relates.

"In discussions with my peers, what I've found is, we have all been in the field or been underground and had conversations that you're not necessarily comfortable with.

"At no point in my career, have I not had those comments. I've had them, but my male colleagues don't have them."

'Being held up as either a beacon or a tale of woe'

Managing director of Nickel Search, Nicole Duncan, who started her career as a lawyer, says mining isn't the only sector facing a reckoning at the way it's treated women, but it is at the forefront.

"I think the mining industry is leading the way in many respects, and it's being held up as either a beacon or a tale of woe, but either way, it's at the forefront, and I think that it is changing," she observes.

"It's really in the lifeblood of Australia and I think that's why the mining industry is held up in the spotlight around critical issues like gender diversity."

One recommendation that came about from an inquiry into the mining sector, that was [tabled in the Western Australian parliament](#), was the creation of a FIFO sexual offender register.

That has now been scrapped.

Ms Duncan says the law needs to be updated first.

system is lagging behind, in terms of accommodating," she argues.

"We need reform of our legal system to reflect where society's going."

She added, one of the challenges of being a female leader in a male dominated industry, is feeling the need to prove herself.

"I'm a female MD in a company that is very well balanced in terms of gender diversity, and I feel the need to deliver outstanding results, to demonstrate that creating results are not driven by your gender."

'Fertile ground for change'

The boss of the \$6.6 billion Lynas Rare Earths, Amanda Lacaze, is disappointed there haven't been more improvements for women in mining and in the broader community.

"Violence against women is everywhere in our society, it is incumbent on us to treat it like we would treat any other safety risk in our organisation and ensure that our women are safe in the workplace," she tells ABC News.

My Lacaze is known for her candour in calling out the gender imbalance in the sector.

At the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum in Kalgoorlie she opened her address to the almost 3,000 attendees, stating there were "more people named Andrew, Mark or Peter presenting, than there were women."

"That's because I'm one of only two women," she noted.

But beyond pointing out the lack of women on the main stage, she's concerned about the very serious impact of safety and fairness on a workforce where just a fifth of those in it are female.

"I am disappointed to be at the stage in my life that I'm at and still see that we have violence towards women, so prevalent in our society, in homes and in the workplace," she tells the ABC.

"I think that we have a greater awareness and that does potentially create fertile ground for change but we're not seeing the outcomes yet."

[▶ Related video](#): Social enterprise helps culturally diverse women connect (Dailymotion)

Social enterprise helps culturally diverse women connect
ABC NEWS (Australia)

1:56

watch on



Here's The Average Price Of Gutter Protection For Houses In Canada

Ad Leaf Filter Partner



Featured by BNN, CBC & More | Top Choice for Entrepreneurs

Ad Knightsbridge Foreign Exchange

Ad knightsbridgefx


Ad Yubico Group



Feedback

© 2023 Microsoft

Privacy & CookiesTerms of useAdvertise




Daily Mail

I'm a therapist - here are the secret signs that you're a TOXIC person

12

113

6




Sky News Australia

Gladstone heirs' apology for slavery is 'spit shining their halos'

15

11

3




ELLE Australia

'The Summer I Turned Pretty' Is Sparking A Gen Z Vs Millennial Divide

31

1




AAP

Farmers up in arm renewables mega land grab

284

29


37



Espresso

The vocabulary of polyamory: Words to know

2




Dailymotion

Data shows women spend more on out-of-pocket expenses


5

1



Secure Remote Access Tech - Enable Secure MFA Access

Ad Yubico Group



The Device That' Foot Neuropathy Speechless

Ad Habseli Health

NEWS ABC News (Brisbane) Follow

Queensland midwives protest over chronic staff shortages

1d

Ashleigh Sullivan says Queensland midwives are overworked and understaffed. (ABC Radio Brisbane: Kenji Sato)
© Provided by ABC Health

Ashleigh Sullivan says hospital midwives are often forced to choose which patients will receive proper care, and who has to go without.

Feedback

The endorsed midwife now works in a private practice, alongside other colleagues who left Queensland's public system due to the poor working conditions.

"You're making choices you don't have to make, and midwives are leaving the profession in droves because of this," Ms Sullivan

"A lot of midwives are getting moral injuries because they have to prioritise their tasks: a woman breastfeeding versus a woman who needs hourly observation post-caesarean."

The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union delegate joined a rally outside Queensland parliament on Monday to protest staff working conditions.

The union has called on the state government to improve midwife-to-patient ratios ahead of a meeting with Health Minister Shannon Fentiman on Wednesday.

Midwives overburdened

Secretary Kate Veach said the union's audit found that 11 per cent of Queensland midwives were tasked with looking after 20 mothers at once.

"Queensland's health system is at breaking point, and we know midwives are taking a huge load on every shift they're working," Ms Veach said.

"Midwives have been extending themselves like pieces of elastic; they're stretched and stretched and stretched to breaking point."

The union is demanding a workforce plan to attract more staff into the state as well as a chief midwife for the department.

They are also demanding publicly funded home births in Queensland, which is the only state currently without such provisions.

Australian College of Midwives' chief midwife Alison Weatherstone said staffing shortages were particularly dire in far north Queensland

[Continue reading](#)

Sponsored Content



6





More for You