

Presentation at
Queensland Resources
Awards for Women Breakfast
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Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about what it means to receive these awards.

Like many women, I have struggled over the years with the concept of forums and awards that are specifically for women.

Being the recipient of this high profile women's award last year, many men and women I have spoken to, out in the industry and the community, have commented that: "There can't have been many women to pick from", and that "A woman only has to put on a helmet and a high visibility shirt in a mine or a construction site these days and she will have her picture on the careers pages of the papers". And most recently: "You would do yourself a favour to stop talking about being discriminated against".

To then go on and receive in November last year, two of the highest national awards available to men or women in the mining industry, the Mine Manager of the Year and the Most Outstanding Contribution to Mining Awards, has brought a similar response of: "Of course you would get it, you are one of the few women in the industry", as though being female alone is why the award has been given in this particular year.

That this attitude exists is not news to many of you here today.

You understand that our awards have been earned through the years of blood, sweat and tears of each person who has received one.

There are however a few aspects about the position of women in resources and in business generally that I would like to give a higher profile.

Two recent reports have been publicized by Women in Mining and the Australian Institute of Mining & Metallurgy, organizations which, along with the Queensland Resources Council, have taken up the challenge of promoting equality for women in mining.

One is the alarming report on the high and increasing pay gap that exists between male and female employees as you go up the levels from entrant to senior management in the mining industry nationally. The other is the change in the percentage of women in various roles in the top 200 companies on the Australian Stock Exchange.

The average pay for professional men and women in the mining industry in 2009 started at around \$70,000 for female entrants and \$81,000 for male entrants (a 16% gap), progressing through an 8% difference for the second level, 14% for middle management, 25% at the next level, until, at the senior management level in mining, the average woman is paid around \$149,000 compared to \$236,000 for the average male senior manager, a staggering difference of 58%, or \$87,000.

Why is this so in this day and age when every mining company of any size has clear and public policies of equal pay and anti discrimination?

One of the clues to why this difference exists is in the other report I mentioned that gives percentages of women in roles in the ASX 200 companies which I remind you includes companies in industries where there are many more women than in resources.

In these 200 large public companies between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of women on the boards dropped from 8.7% to 8.3%. This low percentage and its decline are not good news; however, it is not as alarming as the fact that over the two years to 2008 the number of women in “line management” in these 200 top Australian companies dropped from 7.5% to 5.9%.

This means the proportion of women on these boards is roughly 50% higher than the proportion of women in “line management” within their companies. The figures for women in “line management” in the resources sector are much lower again.

From my analysis, this is what is behind the pay gaps between professional men and women in the Australian mining industry.

If you look at the statistics for women in resources you will find the good news that more women are working at higher levels in all of our companies as a general trend. The average pay of women in mining is increasing as more women take on higher level roles, and roles which have been traditionally held by men and hence have been paid more. So now there are women doing higher paid roles. And there are higher percentages of women employed now than there were a few years ago.

So *why* the alarming pay gap at every level?

In each level in an organisation there are “line management” and “support and services” type roles. In middle management levels, the “line management” roles are, for example, Production Manager, Kiln Manager, Metal Products Manager, Transport Manager, while the “support and services” roles are HR Manager, Safety Manager, Health and Environment Manager, Plant Chemist, Principal Process Engineer, Business Improvement Manager.

All of these roles are at the same level because they require similar intellectual capability and the work is of a similar degree of complexity and uncertainty. The “line management” roles are usually paid higher than the “support and services” roles because they are seen to have more responsibility, have less flexibility, involve longer hours and require more breadth of competency and experience.

The progress of women into the resources sector has so far been more into the lower level roles and into “support and service” roles at all levels. Hence in any level in an organisation, as the women move up and REPLACE men in the lower paid roles at each level in an organisation, we have the phenomenon of the gap of average male and female pays at each level widening each year, through to the current 58% gap at senior management.

This is, however, not the whole story. Even for identical roles, women in mining are paid on average less than men are paid. Why this occurs needs to be studied in more detail. From my experience it is *not* an accident or an oversight on behalf of companies.

There are a small number of high potential women in companies who progress quickly through the levels and are seen to have capability but less experience so often find themselves paid below the median in every level where they work.

Many more women have found that they require more qualifications and years of experience to be considered for the same roles as men, they have to have demonstrated their competence for more years in many more roles at the same level before they are

considered for promotion. And then companies have the deterrent of losing a very experienced, competent and low-paid professional which they will have to replace with a “newby” at the higher market pay rates for men. Is it any wonder then that we find women accepting lower pay rates than men when they do get a promotion?

A woman who complains about discrimination has both a *real* and a *perceived* career handicap. These days this career effect is worded as the woman just not being suitable for promotion. Many women believe that challenging this discrimination galvanizes the decision makers into constructing a justification of why the woman is just not suitable for the higher paying roles. This can stick with a woman for her whole career and the repeated discouragement wears down her confidence.

Add to this the increasing requirement for “line management” roles to be filled by people who have decades of experience operating a kiln or a power station or a mine, depending on the industry it is in. There are just *not* the women to choose from who have this length of specialized experience. In my opinion the requirements for consideration for line management roles are too narrow.

It is not all bad news however. The fact that women are entering all levels of management in increasing numbers points to it being a stage on the path to equality, and that in 10 or 20 years there will more women in line management and paid the same as their male peers for the same contribution.

The women who are leading this change in Queensland are recognized each year at these awards. These awards recognize the *Courage*, *Determination*, and *Sacrifice* over many years of each of these women to make careers in the Resources Industry.

Courage to face the harassment and discrimination that continues, if not so blatantly.

Determination to succeed in your chosen work, despite the many hurdles.

Sacrifice of options for marrying and having a family, of work life balance and of support from people going through the same challenges since we are still so few and far apart.

I thank each of you who have supported these awards. I thank all of the nominees for sharing their journeys with us and I congratulate all of the winners on their outstanding contributions to the future for women in the resources industry.

Thank you.