



**Positive Development
for
Female Geologists
at
George Fisher Mine,
Mount Isa, Queensland**

**Current Growth in the
Resources Sector, Issues =**



- A shortage of skilled personnel / employee's market
- An aging workforce and less people taking up careers in the sector
- Remote location of operations reducing attractiveness of the industry
- Advancing technologies requiring new skills and training

**One Solution Is to
Employ More Women**



- 45 per cent of the Australian labour force
- Under-represented in the resources sector (6% of the sector)
- Diversity increases the bottom line

**Some Barriers Facing Women
in the Industry:**



- Harassment and discrimination
- Lack of appropriate mentors and role models (lack of diversity in senior management)
- Difficulty balancing work and family
- Females are often excluded from networking opportunities

Women-friendly Workplaces Are Characterised By:



- Cultural norms and values that support positive relations between men and women
- Freedom from stereotyping of gender roles
- Conditions that include men and women
- A strong critical mass of women
- Advancement opportunities for all
- An emphasis on reducing unnecessary stress e.g. harassment and work-family conflict



George Fisher Mine

Snapshot of a Workplace Culture

Geologists



- 13 male geologists
- 7 female geologists – critical mass, no tokenism
- GFM has 8% women, most in administration
- Operational geology – 4 females, 3 males
- Female geologists have team leader roles, and GFM has previously had a female senior and female superintendent

Operational Geologist Role



Underground activities–

- Checking underground headings and giving directions on geology-controlled headings
- Checking production/grade control of stope sources and providing instruction on mining of these sources
- Mapping crosscuts
- Liaising with diamond drillers, heavy machinery operators and shift supervisors
- Checking drill-sites and core-drilling rigs

Operational Geologist Role



Surface activities–

- Reporting the stope or bench reconciliations i.e. the total grade and waste dilution taken
- Updating orebody and fault boundaries – i.e. the geological model
- Designing, proposing and risk assessing diamond drilling
- Inputting daily grades
- Reporting the daily geological status of development headings and production stopes and benches
- Providing planning engineers with the orebody domains and geological memos for production stopes and benches
- Being actively involved in development and production designs and risk assessments

Operational Geologist Role



- 10 hour days
- Unplanned overtime
- Rotational on-call weekends
- Heavy involvement with other groups such as Planning, Operations and other members of the Technical Services department

Balancing Work and Family




- GFM geologists are mostly in dual-income relationships
- Children usually mean the mother is the primary carer
- Part-time work is available, arrangements for return to work from parental leave, paid parental leave policy

Technical Services Department




- Younger (average age less than 40)
- Intelligent
- Fun
- Relaxed hierarchy (management has an open door)
- Sport encouraged
- Cakes enforced
- Multicultural
- Diversity of experience
- Everyone has a voice / known as an individual



Focus of Management


Consistent and visible effort to ensure that the workplace is a comfortable one for employees to excel, through reducing workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

Managers lead by example in their regular interactions with workers.



Focus of Management

- Initial and Ongoing EEO training for all
- EEO contact officer network
- Workplace monitoring
- All complaints documented
- Managers receive ongoing EEO coaching
- Enable employees to raise issues informally or formally



Overview

- Critical Mass within the geology group
- Diversity
- Company policies are actively supported by management – Critical Acts



Critical Mass, Critical Acts, and Participation of All Workplace Members are effective in making EEO, Anti-Harrassment and Anti-Discrimination Policies a Reality.



Other Things to Consider....



Mt Isa

- Life-work balance is more achievable in a town rather than with Fly In Fly Out. FIFO increases stress on families
- Larger community is more diverse than the workplace
- Family-oriented with developed commercial and residential infrastructure



Current Industry Climate

- Skills shortage – businesses cannot afford to discriminate
- Many opportunities – other options other than moving upward
- Ratio of female geologists increasing in Earth Sciences courses at university



Things to Note....

- GFM currently lacking accessible senior female mentors and role models – few women in management
- Lack of on-site or work-sponsored childcare facilities
- So far so good while I am a childless junior in the industry, but what about when things change?

GFM Is Women-friendly for Female Geologists Directly Because:



- There is a critical mass of women in the geology group; professionals are employed on ability not gender
- EEO policies are in place with regular Anti-harassment and Anti-discrimination training. Management actively supports these policies
- The GFM Technical Services department is diverse in other ways (individual experience of other industries, multicultural)
- The Technical Services department is a very dynamic, social group that interacts well

GFM Is Women-friendly for Female Geologists Indirectly Because:



- Mount Isa is a residential outback city, not a pioneering town
- Skills shortages mean more opportunities for women
- Earth Sciences courses at university are becoming more co-educational

Last Word...



Fostering and embracing a comfortable work environment for all employees to excel is *everyone's responsibility*.

The resources sector can then further benefit from what is most important – *its people*.