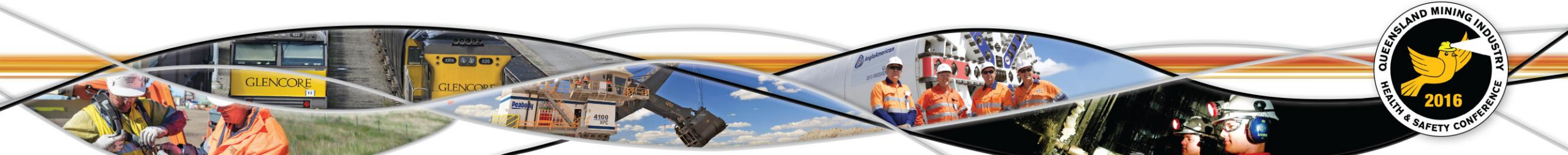


# The management of risk factors associated with FIFO workers' mental ill-health

Dr Jill Harris

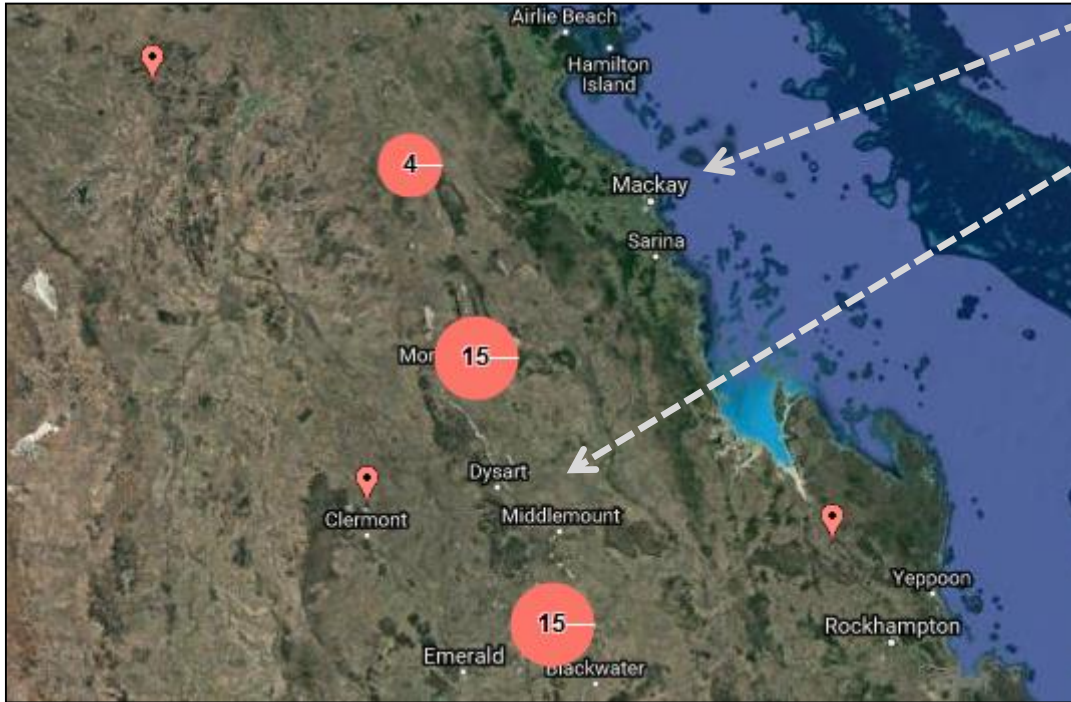
Minerals Industry Safety & Health Centre  
The University of Queensland





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## Impact of FIFO on:



## Worker well being & Source Communities

- separation from family & friends,
- geographical isolation, work/home conflict,
- roster schedules,
- quality of accommodation
- misuse of alcohol & drugs

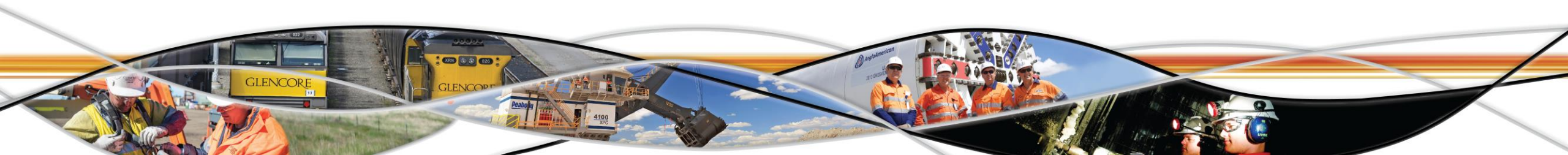




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# Aims

- to describe the context of the parliamentary inquiries into FIFO
- to merge and present an overview of their recommendations
- in a risk-based bow-tie format; well-known to the resources sector







*A Past forgotten is a future repeated*

## A. Three Parliamentary Inquiries

Inquiry	Dates	F
Federal: HRSCRA	Aug 2011 to Feb 2013	host & comm

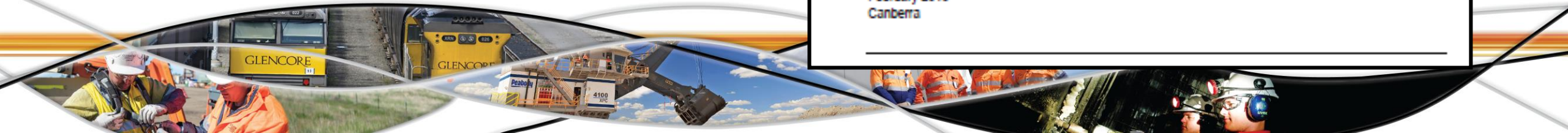
It was triggered as a result of a  
concern that FIFO was “  
HRSCRA = The House of Representatives  
to provide a permanent  
Committee on Regional Australia  
adjacent to establish

### **Cancer of the bush or salvation for our cities?**

Fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforce practices in  
Regional Australia

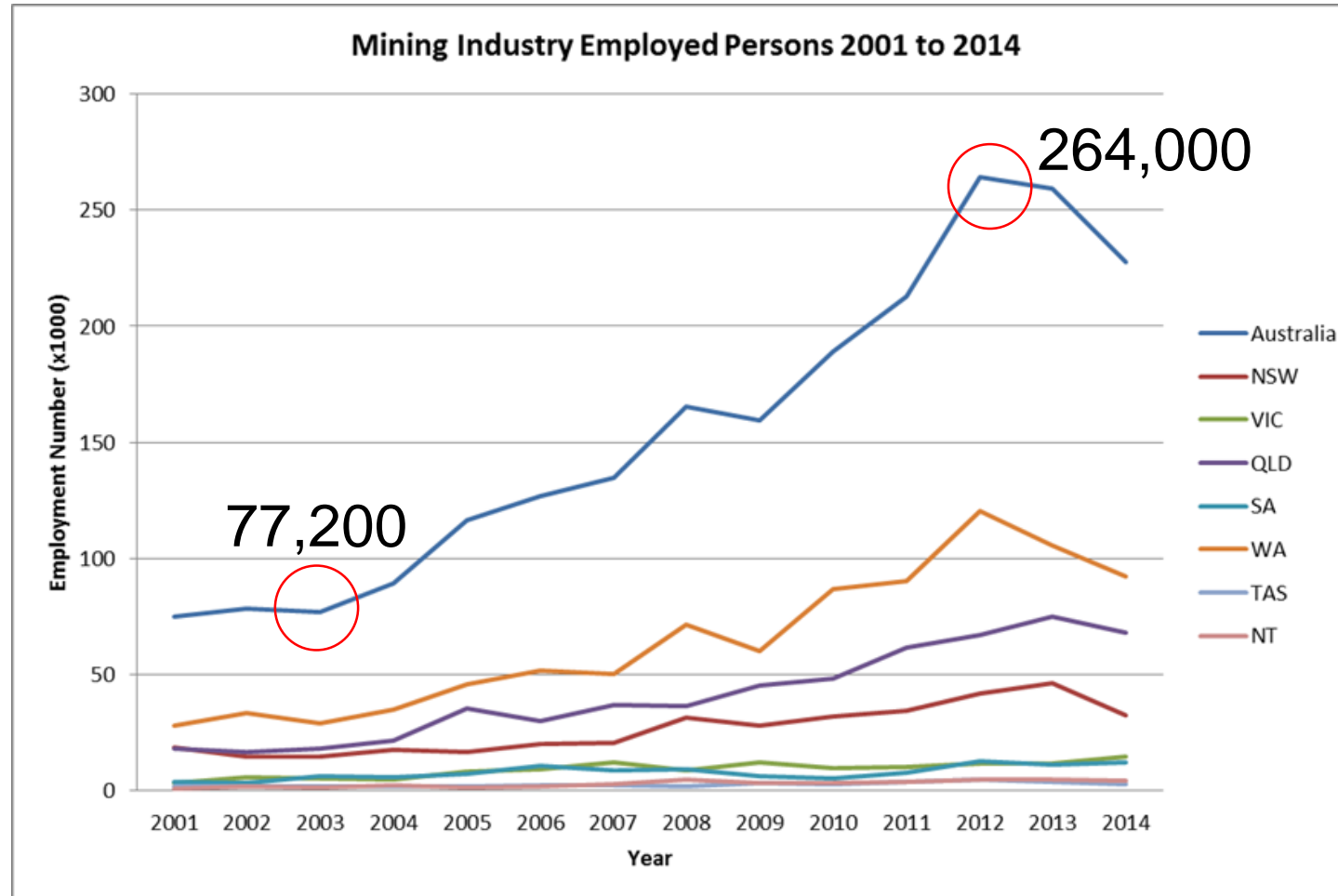
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Regional Australia

February 2013  
Canberra





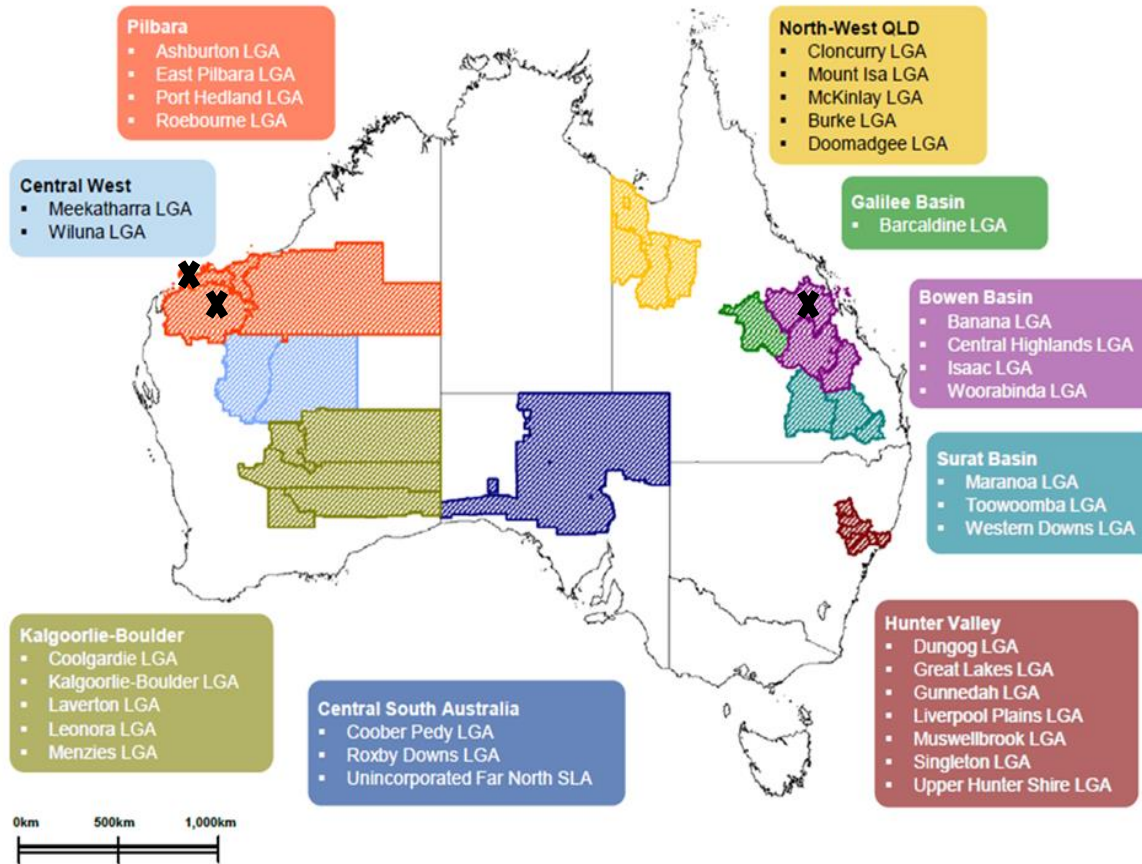
*A Past forgotten is a Future repeated*



The federal inquiry occurred at a time when the industry was near the peak of a ten-year boom on the back of Chinese demand for resources.

ABS, 6291.0.55.003 - Labour Force, Australia, Quarterly, August 2003 to 2012





## Why FIFO increase?

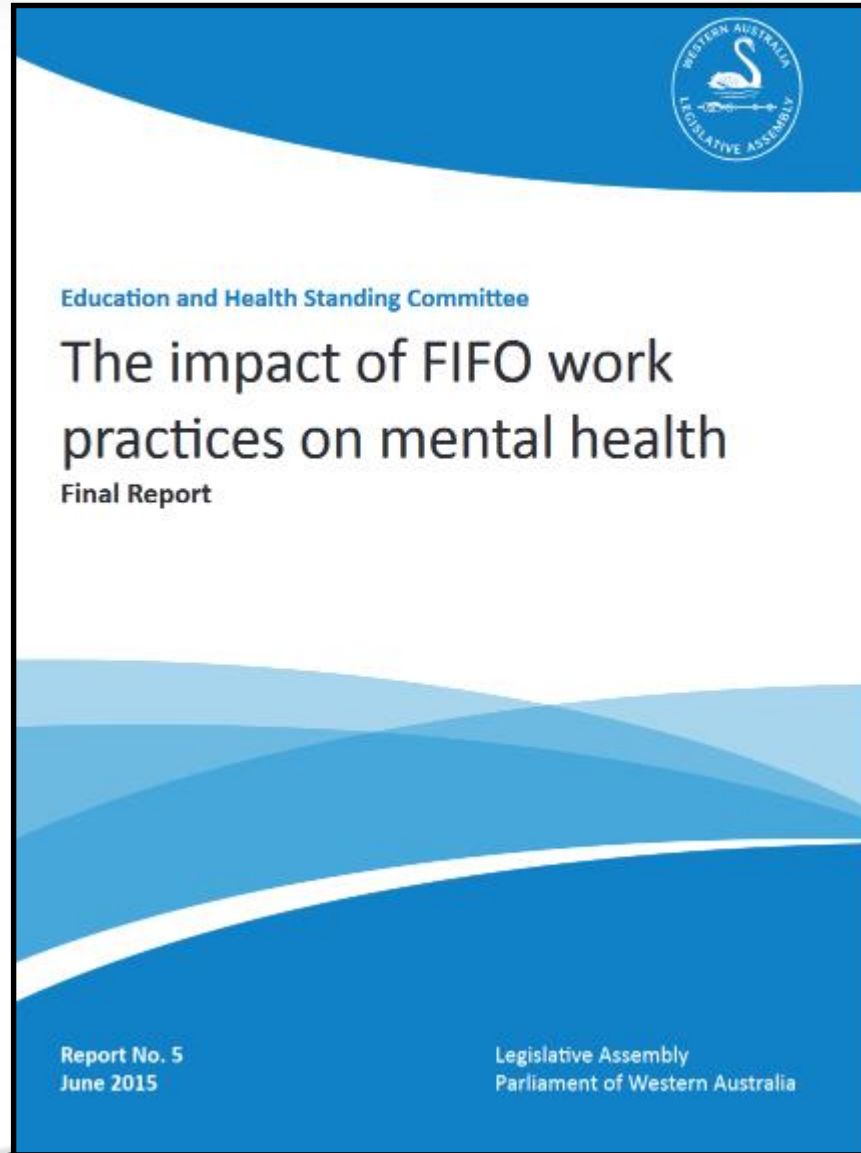
- tax regime changes,
- increasingly remote mining projects,
- cheaper air travel,
- shorter project lives,
- rapid growth in the demand for labour,
- undersupply of locally-residing skilled workers
- worker choice








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Parliamentary



Parliamentary  
**Committees**



**Inquiry into fly-in, fly-out  
and other long distance  
commuting work practices in  
regional Queensland**

Report No. 9, 55<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee  
October 2015

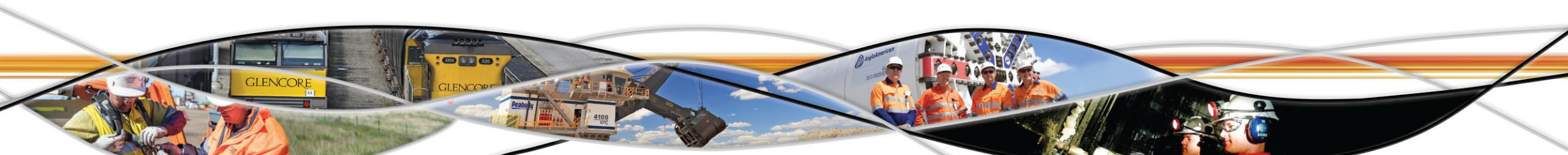




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The 3 inquiries' terms of reference for workers' health had similar objectives and these were generally to

- **identify impacts of FIFO arrangements on workers' health** and
- **to assess current strategies used to optimise the FIFO experience for workers** and to
- **recommend improvements.**







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## Issues highlighted in recommendations:

- Methods for measuring numbers of FIFO workers
- Funding of research (mental health, drugs)
- Legislative changes (WHS, project approval -SIA)
- Development of a code of practice / best practice guide that addresses FIFO & its impacts on workers' mental health



Australian Government

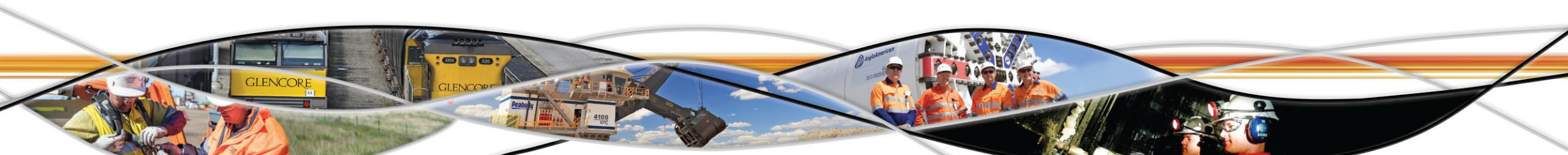




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## Issues highlighted in recommendations:

- Effective workplace health initiatives (e.g. demographic profile, vulnerable to suicide)
- Rosters (even-time rosters)
- Commuting
- Fatigue management
- Workplace cultures - supportive of mental health
- Improved anti-bullying procedures





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## Issues highlighted in recommendations:

- Communications
- Minimum standards
- Minimise/abolish hotelling/hot bedding
- Too highly regulated (lack of control)
- Placement to benefit local communities & mental health of workers (interaction)
- Allow workers choice to reside in local communities
- Improve interaction between workers & communities







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## Issues highlighted in recommendations:

- Independent mental health support services
- Mental health literacy training (leaders, workers, families)
- Peer-based support programs
- Alcohol use: impact on mental health
- A process for the conduct of mental health evacuations
- Policies to manage a suicide or suicide attempt

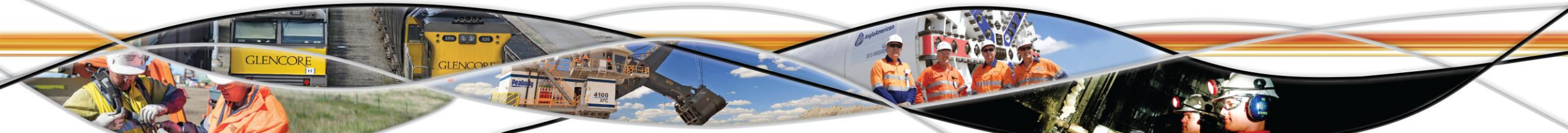




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## The mental health of FIFO workers

- Workers experiencing high - severe levels of distress – also isolated & separated from social supports
- Other factors, such as fatigue and being ‘stuck’ in sometimes controlled camp environments (EHSC, 2015)
- As well, the workforce’s demographic profile – primarily 18 to 44 yr males, are known to be more vulnerable to particular mental disorders (e.g. addiction, suicide).

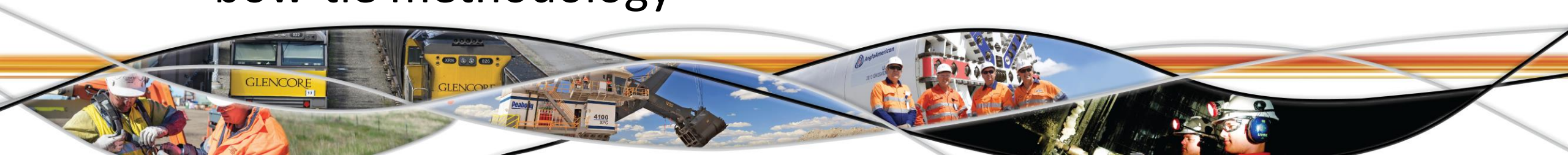




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## Current WHS mining framework:

- Risk management & Safety management systems
- Methods for managing hazards have matured since the introduction of modern WHS regs
- The management of physical injury & disease is generally advanced compared to that of psychological harm
- Why? Cumulative exposure effects, long-developing disease periods and individual worker differences
- Aggregated effects challenge the normally linear approach of bow-tie methodology







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## Bow-tie analysis for managing FIFO impacts

- unwanted event = worker distress
- consequences = presenteeism, absenteeism, turnover, increased prevalence of mental problems or disorders, misuse of alcohol & drugs, and self-harm
- Challenges:
  - Workforce vulnerability
  - Cumulative effects
  - Construction, lifestage, gender, indigenous/non-indigenous workers, contractors, new workers





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# Conclusion

- FIFO practices can place demands on workers
- The values underpinning QLD WHS mining regs apply to both physical and psychological injury and illness.
- It is incumbent on the sector to implement strategies that protect workers from any potential negative health effects that might result from working FIFO arrangements.
- Three parliamentary inquiries have provided guidance on the management of such effects that can be used to inform the development of risk management techniques such as bow-tie analysis to better protect and sustain the mining workforce.

