

the MINING CHRONICLE

MARCH 2013 Volume 18, Number 3

Established 1995

PP643938/0091

RRP \$4.40 (GST included)

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Addiction climb alarm

BY JENNIFER PETERSON-WARD

An alarming number of Australian mining workers are seeking rehabilitation for drug and alcohol addiction, according to recently released figures from a leading treatment centre.

Thailand rehabilitation facility The Cabin has revealed 11 per cent of its clients work in the Australian mining and construction industries, with the majority being treated for alcohol dependency.

Additionally, The Cabin reported a dramatic 30 per cent increase in miners seeking help for a substance abuse problem from 2011 to 2012.

Psychologist Cameron Brown, who works as the Australian-based aftercare provider for returned clients of The Cabin, said alcohol and drug dependency was common among the mining workforce and was a result of several "influencing factors", including isolation from family, adjusting to shift work and work-related stress.

Metro Counselling clinical director Carolyn Midwood said she was not surprised by The Cabin's statistics and had encountered miners with similar problems in her practice.

Mrs Midwood said miners often got into the habit of using alcohol to cope with the "separation, isolation, and loneliness" of working on the mines and, over time, this negative coping skill formed a pattern of unhealthy behaviour which was applied to other areas of their lives.

"Eventually, work and life balance becomes overwhelming, a person becomes less effective at dealing with day-to-day life, and more reliant on alcohol and drugs to block out their thoughts and feelings," she said.

Mr Brown said he had observed that most mining workers seeking treatment for drug and alcohol related issues at The Cabin were relatively new to the industry.

"They are attracted to the idea of making a million dollars in a

year and those expectations, while appropriate for some positions in the mines, tend to be underscored by a big amount of stress - both on their families and on themselves mentally and physically," he said.

"People don't tend to take that into account and hence there are subsequent social issues - as well as potential financial issues from loss of job or the stress of keeping a job - and then people tend to use [drugs] or drink alcohol to cope."

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Sisters are doing it for themselves

Action woman: For Rachel Cameron there is no better job than operating one of the biggest hydraulic excavators in the world - Liebherr R9800. The Downer EDi Mining operator is nominated in this year's CME Women in Resources Awards. Read more on pages 12 and 13.



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Alcohol a coping tool for isolation



Cry for help: Over four years of operation The Cabin, an upmarket treatment facility near Chiang Mai, has witnessed a huge increase in the number of Australian mining workers seeking rehabilitation.

Continued from front page

Mr Brown said most mining workers sought rehabilitation at The Cabin independently, but there had been cases where bosses had provided the impetus for their employees' treatment.

"Mainly we see people self-presenting to treatment but we do see rare cases where they either may have a direct referral from their manager or supervisor or they are more passively supported by their employer - for example, they may be given time off to take part in the program," he said.

Mrs Midwood said the efforts of those employers who were making a conscientious effort to support

their employees' wellbeing should be acknowledged.

"The general consensus is that the mining worker makes a significant contribution to the minesite...and the supervisor or co-worker does not want to see them go down the road of no return," she said.

Issues surrounding drug and alcohol addiction in the mining workforce have also been raised in a recent House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia inquiry into fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) workforce practices.

"The most common concern about the wellbeing of FIFO workers raised in the inquiry was the excessive use of alcohol and, increasingly, other substances," the committee said.

"The inquiry received many claims regarding a culture of binge-drinking and substance abuse amongst FIFO workers."

The committee said that despite many anecdotal claims of high substance misuse among FIFO workers, there was a lack of detailed research about the "actual prevalence" of alcohol and substance misuse amongst mining workers compared to the wider population.

The committee recommended that the Commonwealth Government undertake comprehensive research to develop a health policy response addressing the needs of workers in the industry.



Countdown: The Landsat 8 satellite and rocket prior to launch.

Satellite's eye view is capturing useful data

A rocket launched around 15,000km from Australia could provide some invaluable knowledge for local miners.

The rocket was carrying the Landsat 8 satellite which is the latest in NASA's Landsat Data Continuity Mission that has been mapping the Earth's surface from space for more than 40 years.

Australia has stepped up its involvement in the program by increasing collaboration with the United States Geological Survey in relation to international satellite missions.

NASA administrator Charles Bolden said Landsat was the longest continuous data record of Earth's surface as seen from space and provided valuable information.

"This data is a key tool for monitoring climate change and has led to the improvement of human and biodiversity health, energy and water management, urban planning, disaster recovery and agriculture monitoring - all

resulting in incalculable benefits to the US and world economy," he said.

Minister for Resources and Energy Martin Ferguson said the launch was important to Australia and its economy.

"Earth-observing satellites like this one are estimated to contribute \$3.3 billion annually to Australia's gross domestic product," he said.

"The data they capture supports a wide range of activities including emergency response and management of floods and fires, mineral exploration, urban planning and regional development."

Mr Ferguson said the government's geoscience agency, Geoscience Australia, would use data collected to support management of Australia's landscape.

"These satellites not only give us a view of what is currently taking place, but they also give us the ability to cost-effectively monitor changes to the landscape," he said.

Australia's reputation among investors is being eroded

BY STAFF REPORTER

Australia will not capitalise on its resources boom if the Australian government insists on ignoring calls for a stable taxation system, the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA) warned.

Research released by the Reserve Bank of Australia - *Industry Dimensions of the Resource Boom: An Input-Output Analysis* - shows the share of total employment accounted for by the resources sector has doubled since the mid 2000s.

This growth is reported to have created around 500,000 jobs across

every major industry in the last seven years. This means more than 93 per cent of all Australian workers now depend on the resources economy both directly and through the creation of jobs in construction, manufacturing and other sectors.

"The report supports APPEA's view that the nationwide impacts of Australia's resources boom are overwhelmingly positive," APPEA chief executive David Byers said.

"Government must help manage the economic adjustment necessary to maximise the benefits flowing from this record investment, rather than focusing on their redistribution.

"Almost \$200 billion is currently being invested in Australian petroleum projects and the Australian economy is growing because of these unprecedented investments - not despite them.

"This is why governments must help, rather than resist, the economic adjustment needed to maximise the benefit associated with our industry's growth, by providing a stable taxation system, market-based energy markets, and efficient and science-based regulation of industry activities.

"Governments need to be mindful Australia's reputation as a place where investors can safely make long-term decisions is being eroded

and this is happening at a time when new competitors are emerging."

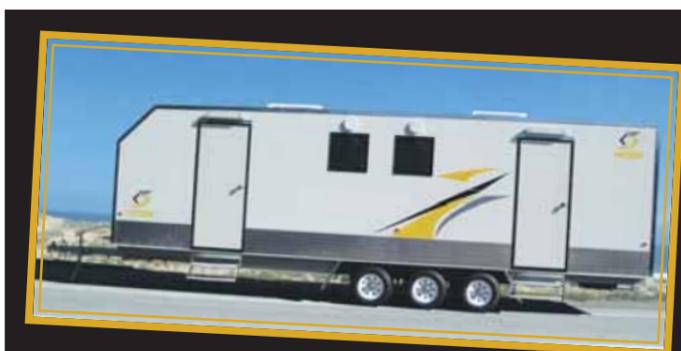
NSW Minerals Council CEO Stephen Galilee said the RBA's findings confirmed the true contribution of investment to local businesses both directly and indirectly associated with mining.

"This RBA paper estimates the resources economy accounted for around 18 per cent of gross value added in 2011-12, double its share of the economy in 2003-04," Mr Galilee said. "It also estimates 9.75 per cent of total employment in 2011-12 was engaged in servicing final demand for resources extraction and investment.

"It's important that credible national institutions like the Reserve Bank of Australia confirm the facts and the positive impact of the resources industry to Australia's economic success.

"This independent and thorough economic analysis is a reminder of the importance of a strong resources sector for jobs, investment and growth here in NSW and across the country."

Resources industry employer group Australian Mines and Metals Association said the data should put to bed any demonisation of Australia's mining, and oil and gas employers.



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