



Mining skills shortage looms

**SARAH STEGER AND
STUART MCKINNON**

Data has revealed the growing skills shortage in WA's resources sector, with job vacancies unmatched since February 2014.

The April DFP Mining and Resources Job Index report shows WA job vacancies rose 1.4 per cent last month, compared with a 1.1 per cent fall nationally.

DFP Recruitment chief executive Robert van Stokrom said the State was "absolutely" facing a skills shortage — a consequence of having the best mining jobs market in more than five years.

"The positivity of it is the fact that things are continuing to improve for WA and that vacancies are improving in the mining sector, which obviously points to a resurgence in mining jobs which is a good thing," he said.

"But not being able to fill those jobs is the not so good thing."

Putting the "encouraging jobs market" down to iron ore, Mr van Stokrom said the mineral was driving growth "in all facets: extraction, transportation, export".

The price of iron ore has risen to five-year highs recently on the back of supply disruptions in Brazil.

WA's three big iron ore producers — Rio Tinto, BHP and Fortescue Metals Group — are also building new mines, collectively an investment of more than \$10 billion.

The trades most in need include electricians, carpenters, plumbers, machine fitters, diesel fitters and their associated trades. Drillers, mining engineers, metallurgists and geologists are also in demand.

"We're not talking about senior roles either — we're talking about the people who actual-

ly do the work," Mr van Stokrom said. "I travel to Karratha, Goldfields and Kalgoorlie on a regular basis, so I'm on the ground there a lot and all of our branches are reporting difficulties obtaining the people they need to fill the roles."

Also on the up are mining and resource job advertisements, which jumped 5.8 per cent last month.

According to Seek, this puts mining and resources among the top five industries with the highest job ad growth in Australia.

In a statement responding to the Federal Coalition's election victory yesterday, WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy chief executive Paul Everingham said the State's resources sector would need an additional 15,000 specific skilled roles over the next six months.

"During the election campaign, Mr Morrison committed a new \$525 million skills package with 80,000 new apprenticeships, in addition to record education funding," he said.

"While this might not help in the short-term, it's reassuring to know that we will have skilled workers coming through."