



EDITORIAL

Parents should encourage kids to seek work in resource sector

Throughout its history WA has been closely associated with the resources sector.

The last boom created thousands of jobs and injected billions into the WA economy.

And although it was followed by a well-publicised slump, the sector is again on the up.

But it seems the downturn has left the industry with a training and jobs hangover.

Yesterday, WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy chief executive Paul Everingham revealed the early findings of collaborative research by the CME and the CSIRO, which had been prompted by a startling decline in enrolments for mining courses nationwide.

Mr Everingham said commencements in mining trades nationally had dropped 10,000 in the past four years.

And WA was part of the slump.

Curtin University's WA School of Mines had only two applications for metallurgical engineering this year compared with 80 places, while enrolments for its mining engineering course fell 70 per cent from 325 in 2014 to just 99 last year.

"The draft research shows there's a whole bunch of reasons why kids aren't coming into mining and oil and gas," Mr Everingham said. "It's definitely a generational thing."

He said young people mistakenly believed the resources sector was not technologically focused, or clean and green and many believed they would have to

travel to regional areas to work.

"But the single biggest factor — if you just park those sociological issues to one side — is that parents aren't encouraging their children and kids listen to one key demographic when they're choosing a university or post-school career, and that's their parents.

"Parents in the past six or seven years have said there's no jobs in mining," he said.

The dearth of new talent entering the industry is expected to exacerbate a looming skills shortage in the mining sector as three big iron ore projects in the Pilbara hit their peak workforce.

Mr Everingham said about 15,000 additional workers would be required in the resources sector between 2020 and 2025.

Having done the research the sector now needs to work out how to convince West Australians of the opportunities on offer.

The variety of work and the advances in technology now utilised means the sector can offer challenging and fulfilling work — which now includes opportunities for women like never before.

So for parents discouraging their kids, it is time to re-assess.

Not to do so would close off options that have much to offer their children.