



# Skills shortage to hit growth

**Zoe Keenan**

As skilled labour shortages continue to loom over the Goldfields, productivity and economic growth in the region will suffer in the short-term, Chamber of Minerals and Energy chief executive Paul Everingham says.

Mr Everingham said further labour shortages were likely to continue during the next three years, as activity in the resources sector continued to pick up.

He said although the industry had implemented initiatives to address the issue, attraction and retention of staff was still a primary issue facing CME members.

"If the mining industry is unable to recruit workers possessing the necessary skills and experience, they may need to compromise and recruit less skilled workers," he said. "This can be reflected in productivity, particularly in the short-term, and may also result in increased turnover for the industry."

But it is not just mining and related companies expected to feel the pinch.

"Positions that remain unfilled mean a potential loss to the Goldfields economy, particularly small and medium-sized businesses that support the resources sector," he said.

One in four businesses consider skills shortages as a barrier to their business growth, including 43 per cent of mining companies, according to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry's latest WA Super-CCI Business Confidence Survey.

Job advertisements in the Goldfields and southern WA region increased by 83 per cent since mid-2016.

In November 2018, advertisements in the region increased by 13 per cent alone, with 1400 jobs available at that time.

Leading the job vacancies is automotive and engineering trade

workers, which CCIWA chief executive officer Chris Rodwell said was close to boom levels in the Goldfields and Southern WA region at 220 vacancies.

"Advertisements for machinery operators and drivers are at their highest on record at 280 vacancies," Mr Rodwell said.

Goldfields Toyota dealer principal Andrew Inglis said his business was facing a skills shortage in many areas, particularly mechanics.

"I've been advertising for mechanics for eight weeks and had three applicants," Mr Inglis said.

Mr Everingham said that at the CME Goldfields community relations forum, regional living and liveability and the viability of childcare continued to be key areas of focus.

"A barrier to workforce in the region is access to flexible and more affordable child care," he said.

"Resource sector companies have developed and implemented a range of options such as redesigning roles to fit flexible work arrangements, supporting part-time work, and job-sharing roles."

Evolution Mining Mungari general manager Andrew Millar said attracting skilled and motivated people was vital to securing the company's future.

"Mungari has introduced flexible work arrangements, enabling working parents to return to work on family-friendly hours, and we regularly explore opportunities for our people to upskill or develop their career," he said.

Mr Everingham said through being a stakeholder in a Designated Area Migration Agreement, skilled migration was another avenue to a workforce for the region.

"While this is not necessarily the preferred option for resolving skills pressures, it is one which has broad support in the region at least as an interim measure," he said.

Mr Rodwell said skilled migration was essential to attracting the best and brightest from across the world to help advance WA's economy.