



STEM for kids seen as key to jobs of the future

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More than 85 per cent of WA Year 12 students will be completing two science, technology, engineering and maths courses by 2024 under a bold State Government strategy aimed at equipping young people for the jobs of the future.

The STEM skills strategy seeks to redress a lack of diversity in STEM education and STEM-related careers.

For instance, women represent just 16 per cent of STEM-qualified people in Australia and Aboriginal people represent less than one per cent of higher education engineering and science students.

The Government has already committed more than \$3.3 million to a four-year professional learning program for more than 1000 teachers in lower-socio-economic public schools.

Mentoring programs, digital and technology programs and a communication campaign would also be launched.

The strategy was developed by a panel made up of industry experts chaired by WA's Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Klinken.

Science Minister Dave Kelly said 75 per cent of the fastest-growing jobs required STEM skills and STEM jobs were growing at 1½ times the rate of non-STEM jobs.

WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy chief executive Paul Everingham noted that today's students would have an average 17 jobs across five careers.

"That's why we need an education and training sector that is agile and innovative," he said.

Rio Tinto, which also helped develop the strategy, last year committed \$2 million to partner South Metropolitan TAFE to develop a curriculum focused on jobs around automation and technology in the mining sector.

The mining giant's planning, integration and assets managing director Matthew Holcz said

Rio was focused on technology and innovation and recognised that STEM education was critical for its future.

"Today, almost all our people work alongside technology in some way and given the rapid pace of innovation and digitisation, this will only increase in future years," he said.