



Education and skills key to maintain resources capability

COMMENT

Paul Everingham

The mining sector in Kalgoorlie-Boulder has come a long way over the past 126 years and as it continues to evolve and change as technology advances, its future remains as bright as ever.

At the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, we've also chosen our key areas of focus for the coming years — competitiveness, capability and contribution.

In early May, we released economic contribution factsheets for each electorate across WA. Not surprisingly, Kalgoorlie-Boulder's figures are very impressive.

The resources sector employs 2193 people and contributes \$1.2 billion to the electorate.

On top of that, it directly supports 697 businesses and when you total the business purchases, community contributions and local government payments, it reaches a healthy \$949 million.

And that doesn't include the \$241 million in wages and salaries.

This contribution and investment by the resources sector will continue to transform Kalgoorlie-

Boulder into a good place to live and work. In the area of competitiveness, we are working to make sure WA is a world leader in mining and energy.

We realise we are competing with other countries when it comes to the mining and oil and gas sector, and to succeed we need to be at the cutting edge of competitiveness.

With a team of about 25 people in the organisation, a third of us are consistently working on ways to improve WA's competitiveness.

When it comes to capability, our skills shortage has become a significant issue, and the industry is struggling to obtain the skilled workers it needs.

Across WA, between 110,000 and 140,000 people are employed directly by the mining and oil and gas sectors, and about a million are indirectly engaged or employed across the State.

Over the next six months, an extra 15,000 specific skilled roles will need to be filled, but the talent to fill these roles is simply not available.

And without a local or national labour force to call upon, we will need to rely quite heavily on international migration. Education will play an important part in addressing the issue of capability.

Education will supply students with the right skills for the industry — educating parents that there are exciting and cutting-edge long-term careers for their children in the industry, and educating government and industry that we need to work together to tackle this issue.

■ Paul Everingham is the chief executive of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA.