

The sisters are not digging it

Federal Government suggestions of quotas to encourage female participation at executive levels have drawn criticism from industry recruiters. Sophie Macdonald, principal of Skye Recruitment, specialises in matching job seeking professionals with employers in the mining and resources sector. “We are on the rising wave of a resources boom in Australia and daily face the challenge of finding professional graduates to fill the positions,” said Sophie. “It would be impossible to specify a female quota.”



However prominent SKIRT member, Chamindri Samarakoon, a civil engineer with Watpac believes the proposed government quota may help in attracting more women into engineering. The Queensland Resources Council’s chief executive Michael Roche is also behind their member companies in encouraging women into the resources sector.

“Despite the top of the range salaries and conditions on offer for even new graduates, women are just not being attracted into the sector,” Macdonald said. “It’s not just women that are rare in the mining and infrastructure job market, but we also desperately need more men too. There is a global shortage of engineers and we are recruiting from everywhere over the world,” she added.

At the University of Queensland in 2004 15 per cent of engineering students were women, rising only to 16 per cent in 2009. At the University of Western Australia in 2004, 17 per cent of engineering students were women, not rising at all in 2009 despite the mining boom in that state. Currently, at the Queensland University of Technology, only 11 per cent of students in engineering are women. “This is despite the federal government’s ‘Year of [Women in Engineering](#)’ initiative where the discipline was promoted in Universities and schools all over Australia,” said Macdonald.

There are a number of reasons why women are not attracted into this lucrative business, according to Skye Recruitment. “Typically the thinking was women were not attracted to engineering because they are male dominated industries, often site based in remote areas,” said Sophie. But there are plenty of CBD based positions in civil consultancy, and that doesn’t seem to be attracting women either. “I believe it is no longer the off-site conditions deterring women from entering the field but rather engineering as a profession is failing to attract females at an undergraduate level,” she added

Low numbers of [Women in Engineering](#) in the past may have lead to women not considering engineering as they have no positive female role models within the industry. Macdonald is positive about the future as the situation for women is slowly changing.

“I believe that the best person for the job should be selected for their skills, abilities, qualifications, not gender or race,” stressed Macdonald. “Quotas turn back the clock for women and assume we can’t compete in our own right. What needs to be addressed urgently is the shortage of undergraduates selecting mining, oil and gas, civil construction and civil engineering careers.”

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