



AUSIMM ADDITIONAL COMMENTS TO FIFO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY: IMPACT OF FIFO ON SKILLS AVAILABILITY

Background

At the Melbourne hearing (14 June 2012), Committee members sought further information and clarification on AusIMM's view on the question of whether FIFO arrangements contribute to the shortage of skills available in the minerals sector. The Committee particularly identified comments on page 11 of the AusIMM submission as suggesting that FIFO contributes to skills shortages.

Further comments

In summary, it is not possible to say that FIFO exacerbates skills shortages in the minerals sector.

It is clear that a diverse array of FIFO work roster arrangements exist. These arrangements have been established to meet the needs of the employer and to attract the best possible employees into jobs in the minerals sector.

The diverse arrangements for FIFO workers mean that the situation will change from one mining operation to the next. As a generalisation, when compared to "traditional full time", many FIFO rosters involve:

- fewer working days, coupled with
- longer working hours per day of work.

In many cases, these FIFO roster arrangements will lead to a lower average hours worked per year than in a "traditional full time" employment contract.

It is believed that in many cases employers offering such rosters would be unable to attract the necessary skills and number of staff if they only used roster arrangements that entailed more days and hours worked. In such cases, professionals are thought to be attracted to the sector by those roles that offer them shorter and more intensive blocks of work followed by longer blocks of leisure time when compared to "traditional full time" employment arrangements.

The Institute's submission sets out the clear view of minerals sector professionals that flexibility to choose the working arrangements that best suit each individual and the needs of their employer is a high priority.

Such flexibility will in some cases lead to a reduction in the number of hours worked in a year by an individual professional. In the absence of that flexibility to choose a suitable roster that individual may prefer instead to pursue a different career.

All of these factors clearly add up to a very complex picture. In some specific situations FIFO employment roster arrangement might make access to scarce skills more challenging, but those same arrangements might attract skilled professionals into the industry in other situations.

It is therefore not possible to say that FIFO arrangements exacerbate skills shortages in the minerals sector.