

AUGUST 2021

**WMW**  
WESTERN MINE WORKERS'  
**ALLIANCE**



# SUBMISSION

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TO THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN IN THE FIFO MINING INDUSTRY



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# ABOUT THE WESTERN MINEWORKERS ALLIANCE

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The Western Mineworkers Alliance (WMWA) was established in 2013 bringing together Australia's two largest mining unions, the Australian Workers' Union, and the Mining and Energy Union (a Division of the CFMMEU). The Alliance and its partner unions play a vital role in campaigning to improve the working lives of the workers employed by some of the world's largest iron ore miners including Rio Tinto and BHP in their Pilbara operations.

WMWA covers workers in roles including Mining Production Workers, Plant Operators, Equipment Maintainers, Supervisory Staff, Drillers, Shot Firers, Trades and Apprentices, Emergency Services Officers, Engineers and Laboratory Technicians,

The WMWA partner unions cover a much broader area within mining in Western Australia including the Fortescue Metals Group, Hancock Prospecting (Roy Hill) and Citic Pacific Mining (Sino Iron Cape Preston) mining operations.

The AWU in Western Australia covers workers associated with iron ore, gold, nickel, lithium and diamonds, and workers engaged in connection with the mining industry, such as mine site village caterers, cleaners, housekeepers and maintenance.

The Mining and Energy Union in Western Australia covers workers in coal mining and coal power generation as well as iron ore loco drivers and crane operators.

Through the Alliance and state branches, the AWU and MEU have coverage of nearly all of WA's FIFO mining workforce.



**Mining &  
Energy  
Union**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Women deserve fair access to the skilled, well-remunerated job opportunities offered by WA's prosperous iron ore mining industry.

As such, the WMWA welcomes efforts by some of the big mining companies to achieve greater gender balance in their workforces, which have traditionally been among the most male-dominated of any industry in Australia.

Shifting the gender balance in 'blue collar' trades and production roles is challenging, nevertheless the increased proportion of women working at Pilbara mine sites in recent years is a noticeable and positive development.

However, mining companies have not done enough to back up the gender equality strategies developed in head office with practical support on the ground to support women in remote, male-dominated workplaces and embed healthy, safe, respectful workplace cultures and practices for all workers on site and in residential camps.

The result is workers' physical and mental health being put at considerable risk. A survey of workers conducted by the WMWA shows that workers are experiencing sexual harassment in FIFO workplaces at unacceptable levels. Alarming, just four in 10 women FIFO workers believed workers are encouraged to report sexual harassment and half believed workers are not supported through the reporting process.

The WMWA welcomes the WA Parliament's establishment of an inquiry into sexual harassment in the FIFO mining industry.

It is time that a light is shone on this issue; and the WMWA is pleased to contribute this submission, which is based on survey results and our experience representing FIFO mineworkers across the Pilbara.

The WMWA looks forward to working with government and employers on practical proposals to stamp out sexual harassment and improve the physical and mental health and safety of FIFO workers in the WA industry.



**BRAD GANDY**

Australian Workers Union WA Branch Secretary



**GREG BUSSON**

Mining and Energy Union  
WA District Secretary

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Recommendation 1:** The scope of the Inquiry should be broadened to include residential mineworkers, all company-paid accommodation and men.

**Recommendation 2:** The Western Australian Government should establish an independent expert body, funded by industry and involving industry and union stakeholders, to oversee management of sexual harassment claims, so workers can bring forward complaints without fear of retaliation or blacklisting by site management.

**Recommendation 3:** Mining employers should provide adequate security measures in all FIFO worksites and camps to prevent sexual harassment, not as a response to incidents taking place. These measures should include:

- Panic buttons, self-closing doors, electronic locking, duress alarms, swipe card locks and other site upgrades
- A visible and trusted security presence, with specific training on how to handle sexual harassment and assault.

**Recommendation 4:** Mining employers should provide truly confidential and accessible employee assistance programs (EAPs), including being available during work hours and with an on-site presence.

**Recommendation 5:** Mining employers should ensure onsite emergency medical officers are appropriately trained in mental health first aid.

**Recommendation 6:** Mining employers should assess onsite risk factors for mental health strain, including rostering practices (particularly given the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 restrictions).

**Recommendation 7:** Mining employers should monitor and publish their progress in adopting the principles of the Respect@Work report and engage with unions on how they can best meet the expectations of workers.

**Recommendation 8:** The WA Government should update its code of practice for mentally healthy workplaces for FIFO workers in the resources and construction sectors to reflect the impacts of harassment, including sexual harassment, on mental health.

**Recommendation 9:** Mining employers should require all sexual relationships between supervisory staff and employees to be declared.

**Recommendation 10:** Mining employers should implement guidelines for curbing excessive alcohol consumption in camps and company accommodation based on responsible service of alcohol principles, safety and fitness for work, rather than a blanket daily limit.

**Recommendation 11:** The WA Government should implement state-wide standards for mining camp accommodation including security, room quality and recreational facilities.

# PREVALENCE, NATURE, OUTCOMES AND REPORTING OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## WOMEN AND MEN'S EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

WMWA's survey shows that a significant proportion of workers are subject to a range of behaviours ranging from physical assault to unwanted sexual advances and inappropriate conversation or behaviour.

Of survey participants, 36% of women and 10% of men said they had experienced some form of sexual harassment within the last 12 months.

It is of great concern that nearly one in four female survey participants reported that they had experienced physical acts of sexual assault and two-thirds had experienced verbal sexual harassment while working in the FIFO mining industry.

## TYPE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS\*

Type of sexual harassment	Women	Men
Improved conditions of employment or career advancement dependent on sexual favours, either explicitly or implicitly	22.0%	6.4%
Physical acts of sexual assault	22.9%	3.6%
Requests for sexual favours	32.2%	3.6%
Verbal harassment of a sexual nature, including jokes referring to sexual acts or sexual orientation	61.0%	18.8%
Unwanted touching or physical contact	33.9%	6.0%
Inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel intimidated	53.4%	5.6%
Sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body	32.2%	6.0%
Intrusive questions about your private life or physical appearance that made you feel offended	55.1%	17.2%
Unwelcome sexual advances	40.7%	4.4%
Repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates or engage in a sexual relationship	33.1%	3.6%
Discussion of sexual relations / stories / fantasies	44.9%	16.4%
Feeling pressured to engage with someone sexually	19.5%	2.8%
Unwanted sexually explicit photos, emails or text messages	28.8%	9.2%
Inappropriate behaviour via social networking sites	22.9%	7.6%

\*includes survey answers 'has happened to me' and 'has happened to both me and a colleague, excludes 'has happened to a colleague'



***“I will not go into the crib room at all. I bring all my own food. I have experienced and witnessed so much leering and sexual comments. I have seen a man watch porn on bus and plane. I have found porn magazine in a truck. I have had underwear stolen. I have had a male try get into my room. I have witnessed a colleague be videoed while eating her dinner and this video shared in a group chat while making pig noises. A female crew member on my crew was bashed by a male colleague. By-standers did not report. People were saying she got what she deserved. I reported harassment on numerous occasions and nothing was done. I sat in my superintendent office crying my eyes out, begging to be moved...I heard nothing back, he didn’t even check on me.” - Female worker, Rio Tinto***

***“I’m recently single on site and have found it difficult to work with some colleagues... Some men at work will refuse to talk to me now because I will not sleep with them.. Being single on site, has changed the way I’m approached by some men now.” Female worker, BHP***

## **OUTDATED VIEWS REMAIN, BUT MANY MEN ARE STANDING UP FOR THEIR FEMALE COLLEAGUES**

Sexual harassment is a gendered issue. The WMWA’s survey of FIFO mineworkers (‘WMWA’s survey’) shows that experiences of physical and verbal sexual harassment are experienced by women at substantially higher rates than men.

Many male workers claim they’ve never seen sexual harassment in their years in the industry; some claim it is women who engage in sexual harassment, or view attempts to call out offensive behaviour as unreasonable.

***“I am uncomfortable with the friendly chats we once had with colleagues is now over due to the fear of offending. The fear is not so much the person you are talking to taking offence but someone taking offence in their behalf who was not even in the conversation.” - Male worker, BHP***

Undoubtedly, there is a cohort of male workers in the industry with outdated views. There are many more trying to stand up for a respectful work environment.

***“I’m always happy to stand up for anyone who feels uncomfortable doing so, happy to listen to them if that’s what need. Recently I had to pull up some of the contractor fitter guys that were working with me, because one of the cleaning ladies had turned down the advances of two of them so the rest jumped on the band wagon bad mouthing her. After ripping into the guys I went and had a chat with the PM at the time, who said he’d look into it, but never did anything. They are all now gone off site, through one reason or another but not over that incident.” - Male worker***

While sexual harassment is a gendered issue disproportionately affecting women, sexual harassment and assault also affects men. The WMWA partner unions have dealt with cases of serious sexual assault with male victims. Efforts to stamp out sexual harassment should aim to improve safety for all workers. For this reason, we recommend that the scope of the inquiry be broadened to include all workers staying in company-paid accommodation, including men.

**Recommendation 1:** The scope of the Inquiry should be broadened to include residential mineworkers, all company-paid accommodation and men.

## MOST WORKERS DON'T THINK THEIR EMPLOYERS UNDERSTAND OR RESPOND TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Exacerbating the high incidence of sexual harassment is confusion and lack of confidence about employer awareness, encouragement to report sexual harassment and support for workers during the reporting process. The WMWA survey shows that:

A majority of women and men don't believe or are unsure that employers understand the prevalence of sexual harassment on site and in camp.

- Among women, just 29% agreed employers understand the prevalence (46% said no and 26% were unsure).
- Among men, 37% agreed employers understand the prevalence (27% said no and 35% were unsure).
- Nearly half of women respondents did not believe reports of sexual harassment were encouraged.
- Among women, just 41% said they believed workers are encouraged to report incidents of sexual harassment with 48% believing workers were not encouraged to report and 11% unsure.
- Among men, 59% believed workers are encouraged to report sexual harassment, with 21% believing workers are not encouraged and 20% unsure.
- A majority of women and men are unsure or negative about whether they would be supported throughout the process when reporting instances of sexual harassment in FIFO workplaces.
- Among women, 24% believed workers are supported throughout the reporting place (48% said no and 28% were unsure).
- Among men, 27% believed workers are supported throughout the reporting process (25% said no and 48% were unsure)

In addition, only 34% of women and 49% of men agreed that the work culture encouraged the employer protects workers from sexual harassment on-site and in-camp.

These results reinforce the massive and important task facing mining companies of winning workers' confidence and trust to report incidents of sexual assault. Failing to deal with this risks undoing all of the efforts of mining companies to make the industry more attractive to women.

***"No support from supervisors as don't want to not be one of the boys." – Female worker, Rio Tinto***

***"A colleague reported sexualising harassment to the superintendent whom took ages to pass it on to the right management and when questioned about it, the lady involved was talked out of taking it any further." – Male worker, Rio Tinto***

***"Sitting in an office. Overheard two supervisors joking about sexual assault. Reported then crucified for reporting it." - Female worker, BHP***

Respondents to our survey reported that sexual harassment was perpetrated by both co-workers and senior colleagues including managers and supervisors.

We have heard detailed reports from members about supervisors and managers pressuring female workers into sexual activity in order to access training and job opportunities and there is a widespread perception that such activity takes place.



## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Despite significant efforts from the WMWA and others, employers have clearly chosen to not take their responsibilities on sexual harassment seriously. To push through the barriers to change, government and employers will need to tackle the challenges head-first. The below section highlights some crucial areas of reform.

### AN INDEPENDENT BODY TO INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS

In order to address the stagnant process of employers in seriously addressing sexual harassment, the WMWA recommends that a body be established by government to oversee the management of sexual harassment claims in the mining industry. Further, given repeated instances of negative consequences for reporting concerns, employers have demonstrated that they cannot be trusted to evaluate concerns alone. Accordingly, any new body must operate independently of employers.

This body should draw on the expertise of specialists in gender equality and sexual harassment with the involvement of industry and union stakeholders. It should aim to ensure that all workers in WA's mining industry - including contractors - have access to best practice management of sexual harassment reports and review the policies and practices of mining companies operating in the state. Mining companies should be required to fund the establishment and operation of this independent body as a condition of access to WA resources.

**Recommendation 2:** The Western Australian Government should establish an independent expert body, funded by industry and involving industry and union stakeholders, to oversee management of sexual harassment claims, so workers can bring forward complaints without fear of retaliation or blacklisting by site management.

## SECURITY

One immediate measure that could be implemented to ensure a rapid security response is to install panic buttons and other security measures in FIFO rooms. BHP announced \$300 million in security funding after an alleged rape at Mulla Mulla Village, including panic buttons, self-closing doors, electronic locking, duress alarms and swipe card locks. These types of measures should not need to be implemented as a response to a high-profile incident – they should be provided as standard.

A visible and trusted security presence across sites also plays a crucial role in discouraging unwelcome or illegal behaviour. When sexual harassment or assault takes place at a FIFO site or camp, a security officer may be the first person to witness and respond to an event. A security officer witnessing, and appropriately responding to, sexual harassment and assault can mean that employers will take action – be it disciplinary or, where appropriate, by referral to police. If security officers do not witness sexual harassment, or respond by dismissing the problem or 'turning a blind eye', this allows companies to avoid their responsibility to keep all workers safe.

***'Providing escorts by security around camp for anybody who feels unsafe [is good practice on my site].'* – Male worker, BHP**

Noting their role as potential first responders, security officers at all sites should receive specific training on how to handle sexual harassment and assault. This should align with legal obligations, all internal policies of employers and the Australian Human Rights' Commission's 'Ending workplace sexual harassment' report, which provides practical guidance to employers on how to handle sexual harassment complaints in the workplace. The first step taken in any reportable incident must be handled delicately and with an understanding of how information taken in the first instance will be used throughout internal and external complaints mechanisms.

**Recommendation 3:** Mining employers should provide adequate security measures in all FIFO worksites and camps to prevent sexual harassment, not as a response to incidents taking place. These measures should include:

- Panic buttons, self-closing doors, electronic locking, duress alarms, swipe card locks and other site upgrades
- A visible and trusted security presence, with specific training on how to handle sexual harassment and assault.

## MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE

The risks of remote FIFO work to mental health are well-recognised. Workers are often distant from their families and support network for long periods of time, creating strains on these relationships and on the mental health of workers. Countless stories have emerged of drug use and family breakdown that have resulted from employers failing to look after their workers.

This plays out in multi-faceted ways for workers who experience sexual harassment. First and foremost, those who experience sexual harassment must be able to access timely and meaningful mental health support through employee assistance programs, their union, or through the broader health system. Effective mental health support can empower those who experience sexual harassment to respond and to pursue the appropriate disciplinary channels. Secondly, those who are undertaking conduct that amounts to sexual harassment may be experiencing other mental health strains, and should also have access to support as required.

All of the large mining companies offer employee assistance programs (EAPs) which ostensibly provide 24/7 access to counselling and mental health support – about all issues whether they relate to their work or not. WMWA members have reported mixed experiences with these services – but negative experiences are much more likely to be shared than positive ones. This means that, for all workers to be comfortable using the EAP, they need to hear their colleagues reporting positive experiences too.

WMWA members experience a range of issues related to accessing mental health support on site:

- **CONFIDENTIALITY.** In order to have trust a counsellor providing EAP services, workers must have certainty that their private experiences will be treated confidentially. Indeed, confidentiality is one of the key obligations of all counsellors, with extremely limited exceptions where a person poses a risk of harm to themselves or others, or information that must be provided through legal processes. Employers and EAPs will push the limits of these exceptions. Unfortunately, it is common for information shared in confidence with a counsellor to make it to a worker's employer or, where a worker is following a return-to-work plan, to injury management consultants.

As a general principle, matters that relate primarily to the private life of the individual should not be used to justify breaching patient confidentiality. Workers should also be given the opportunity to respond to EAPs or employers seeking to share confidential information before it is done, and seek assistance from a union or a trusted person to investigate whether it is truly necessary to breach confidentiality in all but the most exceptional of circumstances.

- **ACCESSIBILITY OF EAP ON SITE.** Most EAPs are only accessible by phone or, at best, video conference, justified by employers because of the remote nature of sites. However, building the necessary relationship of trust for a successful relationship with a counsellor is very difficult without face-to-face contact. BHP and Rio for their part, sought to bring EAP services on-site

when travel was significantly constrained by the pandemic. However, this service was removed before it could develop a positive reputation on site and demonstrate its value. Employers should run another pilot of this program.

- **ACCESS WHILE WORKING.** In acute mental health situations, including sexual harassment, timely support is crucial. Yet many members report being told, while calling EAP, to schedule a time at the end of their shift or when their work swing is over. This can come down to site operation managers being concerned about workers 'not working' while on the clock. But it is absurd to assume that workers can decide when mental health issues arise. Employers should ensure that workers are not discouraged from seeking support when they need it.
- **MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING FOR EMOS AND FIRST AID OFFICERS.** Emergency medical officers (EMOs) play a crucial role, particularly for remote sites where hospitals and other health services are not easily accessed. However, members have reported that EMOs are not trained to respond to mental health situations. All EMOs, as well as first aid officers, should be properly trained in mental health first aid.

**Recommendation 4:** Mining employers should provide truly confidential and accessible employee assistance programs (EAPs), including being available during work hours and with an on-site presence.

**Recommendation 5:** Mining employers should ensure onsite emergency medical officers are appropriately trained in mental health first aid.

The Offshore Alliance (a partnership between the AWU and the Maritime Union of Australia), with support from the regulator and industry, is undertaking a survey on the psychosocial hazards of oil and gas work, including the effects of isolation and rostering practices. The WMWA would welcome support from industry and government in conducting a similar survey for onshore mining workers in FIFO industries. Findings from the Offshore Alliance survey, as well as any future mining-specific research, should inform making the necessary changes to protect the mental health and wellbeing of workers in the sector.

## **COVID HAS EXACERBATED MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS FOR MANY FIFO WORKERS**

Many of the risks of FIFO work have unfortunately been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as travel restrictions have required long quarantine periods and separated many workers from their families. Longer periods of work can mean that workers are forced to remain in difficult environments, including working and living with a perpetrator of sexual harassment. This can arguably reinforce the expectations placed on victims to 'shrug off' repeated sexual harassment.

The WMWA worked with employers across all states where travel restrictions were in place to continue the essential and time-critical work of our resources industry and to look after employee health and wellbeing. This has meant relocation of workers, provision of additional RDOs or leave, and increased pay to recognise the risk of COVID-19 spread. BHP, for example, moved their FIFO workers to a 2-weeks-on, 2-weeks-off roster, and provided accommodation for workers and their partners in Perth. Similar arrangements were reached with Rio Tinto and Fortescue Metals.

Given that COVID-related uncertainty is likely to remain for some time, rostering practices should ensure that workers have ample time off site to rest and to take a break from potentially difficult

work environments. Best practice would have workers on even-time rosters, where workers work for (say) 2 weeks then take 2 weeks off.

**Recommendation 6:** Mining employers should assess onsite risk factors for mental health strain, including rostering practices (particularly given the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 restrictions).

## **FACILITATING CULTURAL CHANGE IN THE SECTOR**

Even in just the last few years, there has been a steep change in the way that society expects those in power to respond to allegations of sexual harassment in workplaces. The Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Respect@Work' report in 2020, off the back of the 'MeToo' movement and persistent high profile sexual harassment cases, recognised that the complex web of legal, regulatory and internal processes for dealing with sexual harassment was inadequate. It made 55 recommendations to improve the way Australia deals with sexual harassment in the workplace.

Concerningly, some key measures have been left off the table - for example, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner will not be provided with greater powers to investigate concerns as recommended in the report. The WMWA endorses the ACTU's response to the Government's 'Roadmap to Respect' and calls upon the Government to implement the report's recommendations in full.

Key among the recommendations of the Respect@Work report was recognising that sexual harassment is an issue for the entire community, not just in workplaces, meaning that the development of evidence-based social change and harm prevention strategies was needed to address the problem. Large mining employers have taken the lead in responding to this call. Going further than calling on government to implement the report's recommendations, the Minerals Council of Australia has established a Respect@Work taskforce with the aim of incorporating the report's principles into the way mining companies operate. The WMWA commends this goal, but in order to ensure it is more than lip service, unions should be engaged in understanding how they can meet workers' expectations.

**Recommendation 7:** Mining employers should monitor and publish their progress in adopting the principles of the Respect@Work report and engage with unions on how they can best meet the expectations of workers.

Closer to home, the Western Australian Government established a code of practice for mentally healthy workplaces for FIFO workers in the resources and construction sectors. Significant consultation was undertaken on this code of practice, and it is having a positive impact on outcomes in the sector by focusing the minds of the large mining companies on the issues that affect the wellbeing of FIFO workers. However, this code of practice does not mention sexual harassment as a significant risk to workers' wellbeing. The code of practice should acknowledge the special risks associated with this particularly cruel form of harassment, and identify the training and management practices necessary to capably respond.

**Recommendation 8:** The WA Government should update its code of practice for mentally healthy workplaces for FIFO workers in the resources and construction sectors to reflect the impacts of harassment, including sexual harassment, on mental health.

Another important area to be considered is relationships among staff. While consensual sexual relationships are to be expected between FIFO mineworkers, better safeguards are needed against vulnerable workers being exploited. This is particularly risky where there are relationships between senior and junior staff - where we have sadly seen managers take advantage of the

imbalance of power between themselves and their supervisees. For that reason, we recommend that mining employers require sexual relationships between senior staff and employees to be declared.

**Recommendation 9:** Mining employers should require all sexual relationships between supervisory staff and employees to be declared.

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Rio Tinto and BHP have recently responded to reports of serious sexual assault in the industry by introducing alcohol limits in camps of four standard drinks day.

Among survey respondents, there were mixed views about the link between illicit drug use or excessive alcohol consumption in FIFO camps and sexual harassment.

Overall, 60% of respondents said there was no link, 21% said there was a link and 19% were unsure. However among women, 33% said there was a link.

***“Limiting the amount of alcohol people are allowed is not the answer. We are all adults and make adult choices. There are consequences if you cannot behave in an appropriate manner. Penalizing everyone for the few people that can’t make wise decisions is just taking away accountability.” – Female worker***

***“Far too many alcoholics in FIFO roles. 6+ beers every night.” Male worker***

***“Spiking of drinks, encouraging women to drink excessively to fit in and taking advantage. Seen on SEVERAL occasions.” Female worker***

***“I don’t believe it’s related to alcohol at all. No one was intoxicated when things have been said to me. I believe if you’re that way inclined you will do it regardless of alcohol consumption.” - Female worker***

Some noted that excessive drinking was constrained by the need to be fit for work and raised the issue of excessive drinking during ‘shift change’ – this is when workers have a longer break between shifts, for example, changing from 7 nights to 7 days.

***“It’s not the type of alcohol consumed but allowing people to drink large amounts in shift change most problems involving alcohol happen on shift change . On sites that don’t shift change You don’t get the drinking related issues because you have to be fit for work I the morning not 24 hours after you last shift.” – Male worker***

While alcohol consumption does need to be managed in camp environments, a blanket four-drink limit is an unfair and inappropriate method for managing sexual harassment. Further, severe and intrusive measures to enforce this limit have been flagged by some employers including bag and room searches. These measures appear to be disproportionate. Managing alcohol consumption through imposing a blanket limit may result in other important measures being disregarded, including:

- **RESPONSIBLE SERVICE OF ALCOHOL (RSA).** Responsible service of alcohol principles are the first and most essential step in managing excessive alcohol consumptions. They must be applied in camp wet mess environments without exception. Employers who serve their four

drinks in the wet mess, despite the individual being intoxicated by drinking at another venue beforehand, are failing to meet their RSA obligations. A robust RSA framework can avoid the use of arbitrary and disproportionate measures such as strict drink limits.

- **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT.** Heavy use of alcohol often masks mental health issues in a FIFO mining environment. This has been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, with many FIFO workers being based in WA for many months on end over the past 18 months away from their families. Simply imposing a drinks limit does not address important mental health issues in the workforce. Important reforms to mental health support offered by employers considered above are likely to also contribute to healthier alcohol consumption.
- **ROSTERING AND FATIGUE MANAGEMENT.** An important factor in encouraging wellbeing of workers is the use of sensible and cautious approaches to rostering. Fatigue can lead to existing mental health strains for workers being exacerbated, as well as creating broader safety risks. As part of any measures to support workers' wellbeing, consideration should be given to rostering requirements (both daily shift limits as well as time on and off site). This can help to ensure that excessive alcohol use is not a response to deteriorating mental health driven by fatigue and other strains.
- **DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES DEPENDING ON SHIFT PATTERN.** With drug and alcohol testing in place, workers need to manage their own fitness for work. Different issues emerge around alcohol consumption during shift changeovers and these circumstances need to be managed accordingly, allowing people to enjoy their free time while preventing any fallout from excessive drinking.

**Recommendation 10:** Mining employers should implement guidelines for curbing excessive alcohol consumption in camps and company accommodation based on responsible service of alcohol principles, safety and fitness for work, rather than a blanket daily limit.

## NATURE AND QUALITY OF CAMPS

Residential camps vary enormously in quality and amenities. Apart from a few standouts, they do not provide sufficient recreational facilities for the number of people at the camp.

The gyms are small with insufficient equipment for large groups meaning there are not many options for young men and women to exercise easily at a time that suits their rosters.

The amount of money spent by the big mining companies for meals has been reducing over the past five years making the meal experience less than enjoyable. This effectively forces workers to go to the wet mess to get decent food and exposes them to an environment they may want to avoid.

***In my new site I don't socialise at all or go to the mess. It's work and straight to my room. I can not take the risk of any more harassment... - Female worker, Rio Tinto***

Hot-bedding, the lack of a permanent room for workers to return to each swing, makes the relationship between the camp and the worker less valuable. If they had dedicated rooms, they would be more likely to treat it like a home.

With iron ore prices at all-time highs, it would be a modest investment for mining companies to upgrade camp facilities to support the health and safety of workers. Camps should be required to meet state guidelines regarding communications access, security, quality of accommodation and access to recreational facilities.

**Recommendation 11:** The WA Government should implement state-wide standards for mining camp accommodation including security, room quality and recreational facilities.



## **APPENDIX: SURVEY OF WA FIFO MINEWORKERS**

A survey of WA FIFO workers was conducted via SurveyMonkey from 12 July 2021 to 5 August 2021. It was distributed to AWU, Mining and Energy Union and WMWA members and promoted on Facebook. 425 workers participated in the survey. The topline results are attached.

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