

# Resource industry female quota 'impossible', says recruitment firm



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Federal Government suggestions of quotas to encourage female participation at executive levels have drawn criticism from leading mining and resource industry recruiters.

[Skye Recruitment](#) principal Sophie Macdonald, who specialises in matching job seekers with employers in the mining and resources sector, says the numbers are just not there.

“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,” Macdonald says.

“It would be impossible to specify a female quota,” she says.

However prominent SKIRT member (University of Queensland club for female engineers) 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 argues.

“It’s not just women that are rare in the mining and infrastructure job market, but we also desperately need more men too,” she says.

“The government would be better served in planning to attract more undergraduates into the profession,” she said. “This boom will be continuing for at least the next 20 years, particularly in Queensland and Western Australia.”

**UNIVERSITY NUMBERS**

At the University of Queensland in 2004, 15 percent of engineering students were women, rising only to 16 percent in 2009.

Currently, at the Queensland University of Technology, only 11 percent 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,” Macdonald says.

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,” Macdonald says.

“But there are plenty of CBD based positions in civil consultancy, and that doesn’t seem to be attracting women either.”

### **OUTLOOK: A ‘SLOW TRANSITION’**

Despite poor university numbers, Macdonald is positive about the future, as the situation for women is slowly changing.

“More women are being attracted into environmental sciences and engineering,” she says.

“This could be due to changes in traditional family roles where women are now becoming primary earners for their families where in the past this was not as common.

“This change in traditional gender roles may lead to future increases of women in engineering however, this will no doubt be a slow transition.”

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