

Walking the talk for change

INDUSTRY leaders at the inaugural Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Perth have called on Australia's miners to "walk the talk" and put concrete diversity and inclusion actions in place, to improve workplace culture.



Panel at Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Perth

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Karma Barndon

Baker Hughes global account director Jeremy Campbell-Wray said those concrete actions could also increase profits.

"Morally, it is the right thing to do," he said.

"The business case, as to why good diversity and inclusion policies and practices should be put in place in industry, has been proven for many years."

Campbell-Wray said it was now time for all businesses large and small to focus on culture and diversity equity inclusion and make sure actions are in line with branding and sentiment.

He said in Australia's resources sector, very few were operating to a gold standard, which was not good enough.

"It is also time for large companies to share DEI policy knowledge for a better way forward," Campbell-Wray said.

"If this is done, our whole community will benefit."

CSA Global manager Ivy Chen said it was critical for the mining industry to take diversity and inclusion seriously as miners were potentially losing their social licence to operate.

"We can argue, discuss and present wonderful cases on technical issues - and we have always done that well - but we also need a social licence to operate and all the technical ability in the world will mean nothing, if that licence is lost," she said.

"When interacting with communities, we often miss out because we solely communicate on a technical level. We love facts, figures and statistics, but we may lose people's hearts and minds if we do not make clear that we also appreciate the emotional context of valid concerns which people sometimes have."

Chen said industry leaders needed to explain to people what their companies were trying to do and what made them special.

"Diversity is crucial and along with equity and inclusion are some of the many components that make up environmental social and governance," she said.

"ESG is very tangible, it represents a real element of risk for all stakeholders and if we don't pay attention or mitigate this risk, then we present a potential for higher risk to investors, which can then impact the value of a mineral asset."

Diversity consultant Sonya Liddle said studies showed that gold standard inclusion practices could increase company profits by more than 30%.

She said diversity, equity and inclusion should be embedded in the way companies did business.

"It is not just morally the right thing to do, but it can dramatically improve the ability of companies to recruit talented professionals and retain them, and it can have a significant impact on profitability," Liddle said.

"Currently retention is where we see things unravelling in this space, particularly the mining, oil and gas and infrastructure fields."

Liddle agreed with Campbell-Wray's assertion that the resources industries rarely achieved the gold standard in diversity and inclusion best practice.

"Globally, having a diversity and inclusion framework that doesn't solely sit with HR and sophisticated diversity and inclusion data metrics are still the most common gaps," she said.

"There needs to be more accountability - if there are no targets to model or nothing to track against, the narrative, culture and behaviour doesn't change."

Liddle said there was a lot of work to be done by some of Australia's largest companies as diversity and inclusion targets became increasingly important.