



Rebecca Knol

SACOME chief executive

After taking a five year break from the resources sector to run her own learning and development business, Rebecca Knol has dived back into mining via her recent appointment as South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy (SACOME) chief executive. **Elizabeth Fabri** spoke to the seasoned professional about her experience as a woman in mining, and what she hopes to achieve in her new position.

Q. Describe your education and professional background.

I have worked in the mining, oil and gas sectors nationally and internationally and have significant on site and consultant experience in community relations, environment and health and safety.

In 1998 I was a recipient of a Winston Churchill Fellowship, researching international trends and practices that led to the development of State and National Guidelines for mine closure planning in Australia.

In Adelaide, I was the National Manager for Major Projects with Origin Energy and in this position was responsible for the regulatory approvals of renewables and gas projects in Australia and New Zealand.

I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, a Graduate Diploma in Environmental Studies, a Masters in Science and a Masters in Business.

Q. How does it feel to have returned to the mining sector after running your company KidsNetwork for the last five years?

It is invigorating to be back in the resources sector and amongst the complexities and challenges that it offers.

While there are encouraging signs that the sector is emerging from a very flat period, the sector is grappling with volatile commodity prices, the need for

growth and de-carbonisation, and the imperative of change in a digital world.

On the upside, change and adaptability are underpinned by innovation and imagination, and there is no shortage of either of those in the resources sector. It is exciting to be part of this complex and challenging debate.

My experience in the education sector, which is also challenged by a post industrial paradigm, and the experience of running my own business have provided a platform of experience that allows me to view the resources sector with fresh eyes.

Q. What do you look forward to achieving at SACOME?

The South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy's core role has not changed. We are here to influence policy, to enhance resources projects and attract investment, to advocate on behalf of our members, and to help connect service providers with procurement opportunities, while broadening the understanding of our sector among the wider community.

I am looking forward to strengthening our strategic frameworks, and the South Australian State election in early 2018 will provide a challenge in this area.

I believe SACOME's work should be judged, at least in part, by the overall perception of our industry. I am looking forward to developing effective strategies



in partnership with our stakeholders to clearly frame, develop and articulate our policy positions and to ensure they are consistently sought and considered.

Q. The resources industry is still very much male-driven. How has your experience been as a woman? Do you hope more women consider a job in mining?

Diversity in any sector is desirable. There are many resources companies who lead the way in attracting and retaining women – it simply makes good business sense to do so.

Working in Africa during the construction of a mining operation I was one of a handful of women (three!) in a workforce of over 300 – I experienced support, respect and mateship from the men I worked with in this challenging environment.

This culture extended into the operational phase of the mine when employment swelled to 1600 but the numbers of women were still low. It was not uncommon to sit yarning about families and friends we missed many miles away.

The industry is full of husbands and dads, wives, mums and partners, and the digital world has made a significant difference to remote employees being able to maintain friendships and relationships across continents and time zones.

My wish is always that women are recognized for their competencies not their gender. It is a fabulous sector with unlimited opportunities for men and women and as my appointment to this position demonstrates, an industry that values diverse experiences and is respectful of women.

Q. What is the best piece of advice someone has given you in your career?

I was fortunate early in my career to be asked the question “what is your purpose”? It was a really tough question to answer and took me some time to nut out but once I did, every personal and professional decision has been easy to make. This advice helped me to look out the front

window and be purposeful about my journey, and I am very grateful to Graeme Guinness for asking it.

Q. In your opinion what are the biggest issues facing the mining industry currently, and how can the industry tackle these?

Like all sectors, but more than many, we have to address the way we do things, because the world now does things very differently. The two biggest challenges for the sector remain unchanged – community engagement and access to land. We are no longer in an era of unabated land access, limited environmental concerns, and limited community interest in projects. Communities are galvanised globally and leverage off social media to spread their message.

Communication is crucial in these areas; communication with each other, with government, with local communities, and with the public, which both benefits from and judges what we do. Our industry has evolved out of the industrial age, and the transition to a low carbon, advanced technology era is both a challenge and opportunity.



Australian Mining Review, National

01 Jan 2017, by Elizabeth Fabri

General News, page 70 - Size: 802.00 cm²
Magazines Trade - Circulation: 3,669 (Monthly)

ID 711209684

BRIEF SACOME_SA

PAGE 3 of 3

