



MEDIA RELEASE

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Inspirational women of SA's minerals and oil & gas industries honoured at landmark awards event today

Inspirational women working in the South Australian resources sector were recognised and celebrated at the first ever South Australian Women in Resources awards, presented at a South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy (SACOME) lunch today.

Four winning individuals were awarded from a pool of around 40 exceptional nominations, together with one company winner and one high commendation, at the event which featured a key note address by Toro Energy CEO and Managing Director, Dr Vanessa Guthrie.

The awards are an initiative of the Women in Resources South Australia committee (WinRSA, a SACOME committee), as part of its strategy to shape the future of South Australia's resources sector by realising the benefits of the increased participation, retention and advancement of women. The committee will now nominate each State award winner for the National Women in Resources Awards, to be held later this year.

[View the winners](#)

Jason Kuchel, Chief Executive of SACOME said "The benefits of gender diversity in the resources sector are many and include improved business performance. These awards contribute to increasing this diversity by celebrating the ambassadors, mentors and role models instrumental in encouraging, promoting, attracting and retaining women in the sector."

Aimee Chadwick, Chair of WinRSA said "The SA Women in Resources Awards are a great way to recognise the valuable contributions that people are making in the sector. Celebrating the achievements that are helping to bring about real change is a positive step forward. "

"Acknowledging the efforts of individuals and organisations is such an important milestone for the sector and supports the committee's goal of increasing the participation of women in the resources industry and their advancement into leadership positions." Ms Chadwick said.

South Australian Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon Gail Gago MLC attended the event, presenting two of the awards. She congratulated SACOME and Women in Resources SA on the initiative.

"The resources industry has historically been perceived to be a 'man's domain' and the representation of women has remained low across all levels. However, the impetus for change is growing and there is now a focus on increasing the representation of women in these industries." Minister Gago said.

"In an industry that continues to have low female participation, it is vital that we honour and celebrate those women who have contributed so richly to the resources sector.

"I congratulate SACOME and Women in Resources SA on these awards."

Almost 40 nominations were received for the awards, with the challenging judging task completed by Aimee Chadwick (Business Improvement Manager at OZ Minerals and Chair of both WinRSA and the judging committee), Terry Burgess (SACOME President), Fiona Mort (Director at the Office for Women), Miriam Silva (Director TAFE SA Board) and Dr Ted Tyne (Executive Director Mineral Resources at the Department of State Development.)

2015 SA Women in Resources Awards winners:

Summary of categories and winners:

Award:	Gender Diversity Champion in South Australian resources
Winner:	Jo Barron-Perry (Senior Mining Engineer - Mine Growth at BHP Billiton)
Highly commended:	Kate Hobbs (Senior Consultant First Principles Consulting)
Award:	Excellence in Diversity Programs and Performance
Winner:	Santos Limited
Award:	Outstanding South Australian tradeswoman, operator or technician
Winner:	Sabrina McKenzie (Plant Operator - Thiess at OZ Minerals Prominent Hill mine site)
Award:	Exceptional young woman in South Australian resources
Winner:	Helena Wu (Senior Reserve Engineer at Santos)
Award:	Exceptional woman in South Australian resources
Joint winners:	Jo Barron-Perry (Senior Mining Engineer Mine Growth at BHP Billiton) and Erin Woolford (Principal Consultant at Ninti Kata, formerly Superintendent Indigenous Programs at BHP Billiton Olympic Dam)

Winners in detail:

Gender Diversity Champion in South Australian resources Jo Barron-Perry (Senior Mining Engineer - Mine Growth at BHP Billiton)

The judges praised Jo's increasing work with a variety of groups promoting and supporting women in the resources sector.

"Jo has made an outstanding contribution to the resources sector as it relates to the attraction, retention and advancement of women," Ms Chadwick said.

"Her involvement in policy and advocacy initiatives as well as on-the-ground activities in various states and territories are testament to her passion and commitment to gender diversity."

Jo's active participation in industry bodies on a local, national and international level have been instrumental in creating awareness about the issue of Gender Diversity in the sector. The judges were impressed by the work Jo has done individually and also through groups in attracting and retaining women in the sector, encouraging male champions who value equality and diversity, and supporting women working and living in regional and remote areas.

Highly commended: Kate Hobbs (Senior Consultant First Principles Consulting)

The judges commended Kate for her work as a Gender Diversity Champion, particularly for her involvement with women in resources groups such as WIMNet and WIMNetSA, and her support of mid-career stage women who may be uncertain and/or finding it difficult to remain in the sector.

Kate has been a visible promoter of gender diversity initiatives in the resources sector. Her active involvement with WIMnet at a state and national level has already resulted in a number of positive changes and the judges expect her passion for increasing equality and diversity in the resources sector will continue to bring results.

Excellence in Diversity Programs and Performance Winner – Santos Limited

Santos has delivered significant benefits to its female workforce through its "Gender Equality Program" introduced in 2011. The program covers flexible working, parental leave with superannuation "top up" for unpaid parental leave, training and leadership development, gender-balanced graduate intakes, pay equality and gender attraction strategies.

"Importantly, the program is governed by the executive team with evidence of Board accountability" said Terry Burgess, SACOME President and member of the awards judging panel.

"It was pleasing to see the driving force behind this Program were the business benefits of greater gender diversity, including improved performance and culture. The program's success is underpinned by a broad range of initiatives and strategies with a focus on continuous improvement." Mr Burgess said.

The judges noted the company had demonstrated the program's effectiveness through measurable achievements including increases in senior, technical and field-based roles filled by women, increases in female graduate and technical staff intake, increases in the percentage of women of those promoted and a reduced attrition rate, including after maternity leave.

Outstanding South Australian tradeswoman, operator or technician Winner - Sabrina McKenzie (Plant Operator - Thiess at OZ Minerals Prominent Hill mine site)

Sabrina worked in hospitality before her first role in the sector as a trainee operator.

Her grandparents – who attended today's event – are senior elders in the Aboriginal Kalparrin Community. They were initially concerned when Sabrina commenced training for her plant operator

role, which they saw as dangerous. However they were delighted when Sabrina completed her training and qualified as a CAT D10 operator.

The crew Sabrina works with at Prominent Hill comprises five Indigenous women operating trucks and her accomplishments have raised the bar for others to see what can be achieved. Sabrina has also qualified as an Indigenous Mentor.

Sabrina has elected to remain within her community rather than moving to Adelaide, where she assists with various programs including a children's care program, is a member of the Ngarrindi Women's Organisation and is also continuing her studies through TAFE.

“Sabrina is an excellent role model for the resources sector and has broken new ground as an Aboriginal woman in a male-dominated industry” said Mr Burgess. “She has excelled in her roles as a plant operator, Indigenous mentor and active community contributor.”

Exceptional young woman in South Australian resources Winner - Helena Wu (Senior Reserve Engineer at Santos)

Helena came to Australia at the age of four with non-English speaking parents. Inspired from an early age to work hard, she excelled at Queensland University of Technology, choosing Mechanical Engineering despite her father’s concerns about this choice for a woman.

Helena was awarded the QUT University Medal upon graduating from an accelerated program with both Bachelor’s and Masters Degrees. She joined Santos as a graduate and progressed into an Engineer role, followed by Planning Analyst and Senior Engineer. She received the Society of Petroleum Engineers Outstanding Service Award and Young Energy Professional Award for Southern Asia Pacific in 2014.

“Helena’s passion for lifelong learning and ability to recognise and grab hold of opportunities are key factors in her success, and her participation in industry education initiatives and volunteerships with industry bodies are evidence of her commitment to promoting the resource sector’s social license to operate.” Ms Chadwick said.

The judges were impressed by Helena's involvement with young people, for example in Science Alive, as Chair of the Committee for Education and Teachers' Day and as a frequent speaker at university and industry events. She is part of the SPE International Gender Diversity task force and participates in a number of groups where women are given the opportunity to raise and discuss career paths and female representation. She is currently co-authoring a paper on the "Adoption of Social Media in the Australian Energy and Resources Sector".

Exceptional woman in South Australian resources: Joint Winner - Jo Barron-Perry (Senior Mining Engineer - Mine Growth at BHP Billiton)

Jo followed her father into engineering, studying mining engineering at Ballarat University and was in the first year of women students who were employed in full time underground shift roles at Mt Isa. She completed her degree on a part time and periodic basis finishing it at the Western Australia School of Mines (WASM) in Kalgoorlie.

With the varying resources cycles and childrearing, she has balanced her work/family life through some particularly challenging periods including unemployment, limited access to childcare, additional study, and fly in fly out work. During sector downturns and periods of unemployment she has worked stints in a variety of industries while maintaining a myriad of volunteer roles on committees and initiatives of both her local communities and the mining industry.

Jo has built a successful career over more than two decades working in traditionally male dominated roles with BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and more - including mining engineer, technician and senior management positions.

While building her own career, she has also steadily grown her activities supporting other women in the resources sector, understanding firsthand what other women may be experiencing and proactively influencing, supporting and mentoring others while addressing the issues around gender diversity at a company and industry level. (Refer to Jo's Gender Diversity Champion in South Australian resources win, above.)

Joint Winner - Erin Woolford – Principal Consultant at Ninti Kata, formerly Superintendent Indigenous Programs at BHP Billiton Olympic Dam

Erin says at age 17 she had "no real direction in life", coming from humble beginnings as an Arrernte-Kuyani woman raised in Port Augusta. She has since achieved much personally, professionally and for the communities in which she has worked.

Erin began her career with an Aboriginal company on the Community Development Employment Program, gaining exposure to positive role models and talented mentors. She progressed to Director, APY Lands and Regional Development and was awarded Woman of Achievement for Advancing the Status of Women in 2014 for her work in the APY Lands.

Starting her resources sector career in 2011 at Olympic Dam, she implemented the Aboriginal Participation Program which has resulted in over 130 Aboriginal recruitments across Olympic Dam. She received the Premier's Award for Social Inclusion in 2014 for this program that she devised, implemented and managed.

"Erin's ability to influence, coach and mentor at all levels has been fundamental to her outstanding achievements, particularly in empowering and creating opportunities for Aboriginal people," said Ms Chadwick.

The judges commented that as a representative of BHP Billiton, Erin speaks on behalf of the company on community, health and well-being issues. She has facilitated many community consultations and has routinely encouraged female participation in industry.

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