



**Friday, June 2**

**Media release**

## **Mining employees the forgotten workforce in suicide research**

Mining workers are often overlooked in Australian suicide research, as revealed by a national study on suicide rates.

The Report, *Suicide in the Australian Mining Industry: A National Study* by researchers from the University of Melbourne's School of Population and Global Health, was launched today (Friday, June 2), by Member for Hunter Dan Repacholi MP on behalf of Federal Resources Minister Madeleine King at Glencore's Ravensworth operation in the Hunter Valley.

The paper, commissioned by suicide prevention body MATES in Construction, Mining and Energy, is the first to look into rates of suicide within the mining sector.

Study author, Associate Professor Tania King said the report estimated that suicide rates among mining workers is between 11 and 25 per 100,000 – and probably closer to 25 per 100,000.

“That is the clearest picture we can establish,” Associate Professor King said.

“Research that might inform the development of industry-specific suicide prevention programs has been hampered by a lack of historical data into rates of workplace-specific suicide.”

Associate Professor King said the report also suggests rates of suicide among male mining workers may be increasing, while suicide rates for males across most other workplaces categories show some decline.

The Federal Resources Minister welcomed the report, describing mining workers as “very often the forgotten people in Australian suicide research”.

“Coming from WA, I know many mining workers. I've heard these stories first hand – the isolation of being at camp and away from family, shift work meaning you miss important family events and public holidays. Of course this would impact your mental health,” Minister King said.

“We need more research to better identify suicide trends and possible causes. The more data we can gather, the more we can determine the types of support that might be needed for this workforce.”

MATES national CEO Chris Lockwood recognised the increased risk of suicide for those working in mining and called for all in the mining industry to join us in tackling this problem with the tools we already have that we know are working right now.

“We understand that suicide is a problem that is impacting too heavily on those working in the mining industry, their families and regional communities. This report confirms the vital importance of all of us working together as an industry to step forward and look after all of our MATES working in mining.” Mr Lockwood said.

MATES in Construction (Aust) Ltd



“One of the problems highlighted by this research was the classification of workplace by the coronial system, with mining, as one of Australia’s most important industries, lacking access to the full detail regarding the impact on the well-being of its workers. We need this type of data to determine the level of support required for this segment of the Australian workforce.”

“As the report points out, detailed information on specific industries should be routinely collected in coronial data to enable the rigorous assessment of industry as well as occupational patterning of suicide.”

To address these concerns MATES in Mining, with the support of leading mining companies such as Glencore, have implemented their workplace-based peer support and training programs recognised as world’s best practice by the World Health Organisation.

Director of Health, Safety and Training at Glencore Coal, Kylie Ah Wong, said partnerships such as this foster a supportive culture, raising awareness and encouraging open conversations about suicide and mental health within the mining industry.

“When someone is struggling with their mental health it can be challenging to seek help. This partnership is about training our workforce to identify behavioural changes in their mates so we can offer support when it’s needed most,” Mrs Ah Wong said.

“Our employees look out for one another’s safety every shift, and that sense of camaraderie is deeply embedded in the mining industry. It makes sense to use that same approach when it comes to looking out for the mental health and wellbeing of our workmates.”

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#### **Note to editors:**

**Please list MATES as one of your two providers of suicide support services.**

- **For help, contact MATES 24/7 help line 1300 642 111, [mates.org.au](http://mates.org.au)**

#### **About MATES**

**MATES is a charity established in 2008 to reduce the high level of suicide among Australian construction, energy and mining workers. MATES in Mining, provides awareness training on the ground to mining industry workers to give them the skills to recognise the signs a workmate might be struggling with life. MATES provides suicide prevention through community development programs on sites, and by supporting workers in need through case management and a 24/7 help line.**