



South Australian Mining and Resources Sector: Covid-19 Response

A Skills Perspective

Introduction

The Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic presents us with unprecedented challenges for industry, communities and individuals across all industry sectors. This briefing provides insights into the resources industry response to date and links to State and Commonwealth government assistance available to support businesses.

Industry Response

What is happening now?

RESA's Hiring Intentions data indicates **287 job advertisements** have been placed for the SA resources sector in the period from the 30th January, when the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus pandemic, to the 21st March. This is a **25% decrease** when compared to the same time period in 2019.

Although it is a significant decrease in overall job ad's it is also an indicator that there continue to be job opportunities in the resources sector. Job ads were placed by **106 different companies** which also suggests activity in the resources and energy supply chain is constant at this point in time.

Our mining operators are taking steps to ensure the safety of the workforce and community and secure current and future operations. These currently include:

- *New jobs* in frontline operational roles
- *Interstate/international travel restrictions*
- Using *state based personnel* at sites
- *Limiting site staff* to key frontline workforce only
- *Remote / Working from home* arrangements in place
- Working with suppliers (*support packages*, particularly in regional communities)

- Site *medical facilities* to conduct testing, isolating and contact tracing (if required)
- Ceasing work in and near remote indigenous communities to *protect vulnerable people*
- Extended *employee assistance programs*
- Restricted entry of contractors (with company to *assuming direct costs*)
- *Accelerated payments* to small, local and indigenous businesses
- Implementing *social distancing* at work sites, camps and offices
- Increased *flexible rostering*
- *Increasing hygiene* protocols for its heavy equipment, trucks and light vehicles.

The measures in place will vary between operators. Use the links below for updates South Australia's Major Project operators.



[More information >](#)



[More information >](#)

The measures being implemented may provide some guidance for supply chain and other related companies for steps they may be able to take to protect their workforce and community.



287 Job Advertisements in **106** companies.



25% decrease in job ads

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Workforce Implications

A Skills Perspective

The Energy and Mining sector has a critical role in delivering economic and social benefit to the state of South Australia. In 2019 the sector was identified as a priority industry in the Growth State plan, with a 3% growth target. The worldwide impact of the coronavirus pandemic has shifted the industry focus to sustaining operations, providing a safe working environment and working with communities and suppliers to weather this particular storm.

What will this mean in terms of ensuring a skilled workforce?

New jobs

BHP announced 1500 new jobs as part of its strategic response to the coronavirus outbreak. The roles are expected to be key frontline roles critical to operations. It is likely other mining operations interstate will be considering similar responses. It is expected these will be predominantly trades and operator roles. In an industry that was already experiencing pressure in recruiting skilled workers in these roles.

There is an opportunity through this process to identify skilled individuals working in other industries that may be available to backfill these opportunities through this period of peak demand.

Once candidates have been identified there is also an additional pressure in the large scale on-boarding of employees and verification of competency during the early stages of employment.

There may be a role for governments to play in supporting partnership opportunities for existing training providers to expedite the onboarding process through:

- supported mine induction programs
- supported verification of competency processes.

This may provide greater continuity of employment in priority trades such as diesel mechanics, mechanical fitters, electricians and operator roles.

The industry response has also created opportunities in workplace hygiene that may provide alternative employment for those willing and able to carry out these tasks who have been affected by shutdowns and job losses in other industries.

Job Losses

In areas of operations that are not central to frontline operations there may be some job losses across the skills pipeline. This may be in supply chain companies or in exploration and other services not included in the priority industries brief.

The skills associated with these job roles and operations will be critical in recovery. Although industry and government are taking steps to secure jobs for the future – there will be some job losses.

A lesson learnt from the reasonably recent experience of the mining industry downturn was that once skilled individuals leave the sector it can be very difficult to attract them back.

At RESA we believe that a coordinated approach to connecting individuals with opportunities will assist to:

- maintain confidence in the sector
- assist industry in filling priority occupations
- assist individuals from other affected industry sectors to fill job opportunities in the sector.

Skills - Provider Capacity

In South Australia, and nationally, the capacity of training providers to deliver the skills required for the resources sector was greatly eroded as a result of the mining industry downturn. This has created a chasm in the skills pipeline which is still being felt today – particularly in the areas of mining engineering and drilling.

We can expect that our Universities and training providers will again be challenged by the current situation. This is particularly to be felt in the Vocational Education and Training sector where funding arrangements are based on successful completions / attainment of competency, but costs are incurred in delivery. The need to observe social distancing and limiting site access to core personnel has particular impact in the delivery and assessment of high risk activities using industry specific plant and equipment – often only available at the worksite. Although training may be able to be conducted – in part – using distance education methodologies supervised practice and assessment must be undertaken within line of sight.

The University sector is well positioned to continue to support students throughout this period of social distancing.

There may be an opportunity for government to trial an alternative funding methodology that will support registered training providers to deliver skills and knowledge using distance methodologies while the current restrictions are in place.

This would assist in maintaining the capability of the training sector through to a time when normal operations can resume.

Embracing Innovation and Technology

The Commonwealth and SA Governments have provided extensive support to our industries to build their capability in implementing technology to provide flexible business solutions.

However, it is unclear at this stage how well equipped supply chain companies are to implement remote working strategies. This can be particularly challenging in regional and remote areas where access to telecommunications infrastructure may not be sufficient to support a virtual office environment.

There is an opportunity to make tools and resources available to industry to support the adoption of technologies that will enable them to maintain their operations and workforce throughout while coronavirus containment measures are in place.

Support for South Australian Businesses

Commonwealth and SA Government Industry Response Packages

The table below provides a summary of Commonwealth and State government initiatives available to support jobs and businesses.

Business Type	Business Support Initiatives
Sole Traders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deferred loan repayments• Instant asset write-off• Backing business investment – supporting asset installation• Increased and accelerated income support• Assistance for affected regions, communities and industries• SME Guarantee Scheme• Early access to superannuation• Additional Employee Assistance
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deferred loan repayment for six months• Boosting cash flow for employers• Assistance to help pay apprentice and trainee wages
Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deferred loan repayments for six months• Temporary relief for financially distressed businesses• Instant asset write-off• Backing business investment• Increased and accelerated income support• Assistance for affected regions, communities and industries• Tax support• SME Guarantee Scheme
More information > www.business.sa.gov.au	

Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance

Supporting jobs and opportunities for South Australians

RESA will continue to operate throughout this period of uncertainty. We are fully ready to continue supporting our stakeholders through the challenges ahead.

Our current priorities will be to:

- Share information that will support the continued operation of our stakeholders
- continue to identify workforce skills priorities,
- provide advice to government on skilling requirements for industry
- develop programs and strategies to prepare and connect individuals with industry.

We encourage stakeholders to contact us to share insights into skills and workforce priorities throughout these challenging times.

More importantly, please take steps to ensure your personal safety and protect our community by following the Australian Government Department of Health guidelines. More information: www.health.gov.au



Good Hygiene



Social Distancing



Public Gathering limits



Self Isolation

Contact Us

Jodie Badcock

Chief Executive Officer

Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance

19/22 Ware St, Thebarton SA 5031

m 0438 829 000 | e jodie.badcock@resa.org.au

www.resa.org.au