

BHP eyeing improved gender diversity to boost productivity

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BHP Billiton Group is looking to improve gender diversity as a way to boost safety, productivity and cost-savings, said Yvonne Tan, human resources business partner with the company, at the Mining Investment Asia conference in Singapore on March 28.

On sidelines of the conference, Tan told S&P Global Market Intelligence that the group is aiming to improve gender balance at its projects.

"[Studies] show that our projects with better gender diversity also outperform other projects in terms of operation safety, output and production said.

"We are trying to replicate such diversity for other projects as well as the larger group," Tan said, adding that BHP has three women on the board and 30% female representation.

The miner is not seeking to further increase this percentage for now, as changes to the board are long-term decisions, Tan said.

As part of a gender diversity initiative within the group, BHP is aiming for a 50% female workforce by 2025, though now women account for less than 30% of its employees and contractors.

"[The target] was deliberate and was a tone from the top," Tan said.

Meanwhile, BHP is aware of potential moral concerns that may arise as it pursues this goal, according to Tan.

"As to our aspirational goal on gender balance, it may cause moral issues, particularly with males," Tan said, noting that it may lead to fewer jobs in the mining workforce.

She added that town halls, workshops and other events at BHP have been designed to address the future of work for employees.

"One element we want to clarify is that gender balance should be reflected democratically in the community we operate. If a particular mining town generally low on female representation, we are not going to force it," she said.

Tan also said she was aware of the gender pay gap in the mining industry, noting that BHP is "deliberately engaging measures" to close it.

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