

 **EQ Conversations: Time for a Change**

WOMEN IN MINING PANEL POST-EVENT REPORT



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Introduction

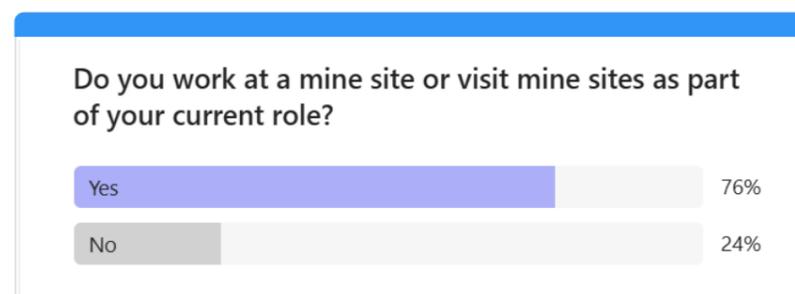
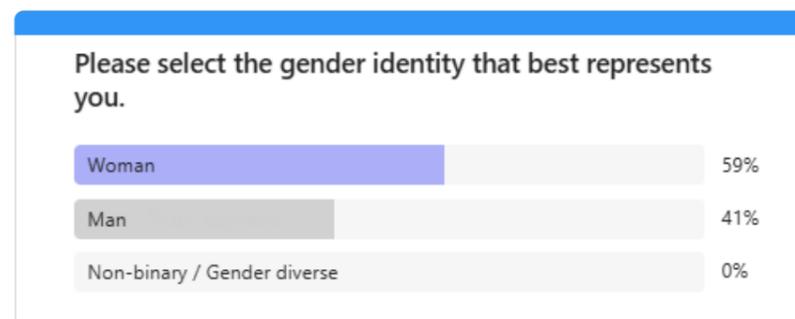
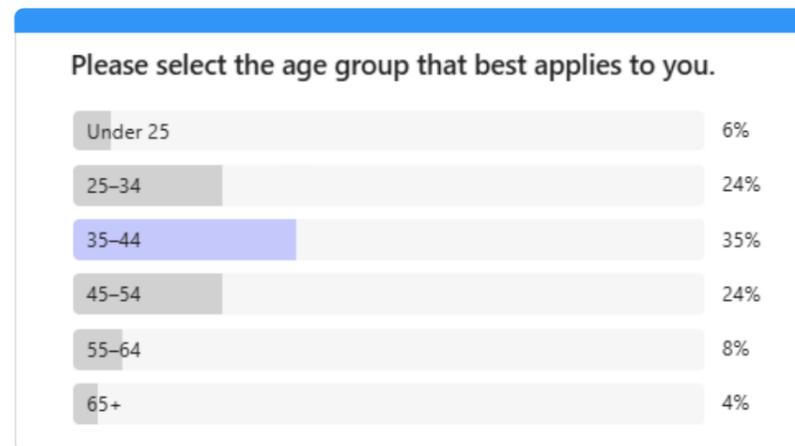
On June 11, 2025, Equilibrium Mining hosted a virtual panel discussion titled “**EQ Conversations: Time for a Change.**” The event welcomed more than 85 attendees, and was aimed to address strategies for improving representation, opportunities, and experiences for women in the mining industry.

Equilibrium Mining (EQ) is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within the mining industry, focusing on creating a company culture that emphasizes the importance of diverse perspectives in driving innovation and improving workplace safety and productivity. The hosting of this event aligns with EQ’s mission and values and provided the opportunity for EQ to be a thought-leader, sparking conversation around a critical topic that could drive valuable progress.

The event was held to align with **International Day of Women in Mining** on 15th June, an annual campaign that brings light to the advancements in the industry, as well as opportunities available for the mining sector to continue to become more sustainable, responsible and inclusive. Poll results at the start of the session highlighted a diverse audience, spanning age groups, genders, and job roles, reinforcing the importance of inclusive perspectives in the conversation.



Attendee Demographic



Objective

The event was designed to create meaningful dialogue around improving gender diversity and inclusion in the mining sector. By drawing on the global experience of the expert panel, it aimed to explore key issues and offer attendees practical, day-to-day strategies they can implement within their own teams and organizations.

The end goal was to influence better decision-making, foster safer and more inclusive teams, enable innovation through diversity of thought, and ultimately help shape workplaces people are proud to be part of.



The panel was moderated by **Karen Moffitt**, CEO of Equilibrium Mining, and the panel featured leaders from across the industry:



Graham Crook
Chief Advisor - Resource Development, Rio Tinto



Jo-Anne Dudley
Director, Miner Ventures / Ora Banda Mining



Karl Lawrence
Chief Technical Officer, Equilibrium Mining



Karyn Gallant
Global Operations Lead, Equilibrium Mining

This conversation was not intended to be a one-off event, but rather an ongoing initiative to build a community, share progress, and continue the push for real, measurable change across the mining sector.

Importance of Gender Diversity and Inclusion

Karen began the discussion by asking each of the panelists to reflect on why the topic was of importance to them. A cohesive theme was found in the responses: improving gender diversity and inclusion in mining is not only a matter of equity, but also essential to high performance, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

Graham Crook reflected on how career advancement is often driven by informal networks and access to opportunity, which disproportionately benefit men. He noted that in nearly 30 years, he had never reported to a female leader, a statistic that prompted personal reflection and a desire to help shape a more inclusive workplace. Citing Rio Tinto's Everyday Respect report, Crook reinforced that inclusive cultures are safer and more productive and that change must be intentional and supported by leadership.

Jo-Anne Dudley highlighted that in her 30+ years in mining, she had experienced only one workplace where 20% of the crew were women and it was the safest and most productive environment she had worked in. She emphasized that the industry's increasing complexity and pressure to meet operational and social expectations require diverse thinking to remain competitive. She also spoke to the economic mobility mining has afforded her and stressed the importance of ensuring others have access to similar opportunities.

Karl Lawrence spoke to the importance of diversity of thought, particularly in technical and leadership contexts. He noted that innovation in mining will depend on the inclusion of a broader range of perspectives and skills. Acknowledging his own early assumptions about gender not being a barrier, he described how listening to colleagues revealed the systemic challenges many women continue to face and highlighted the importance of ongoing conversations to drive change.

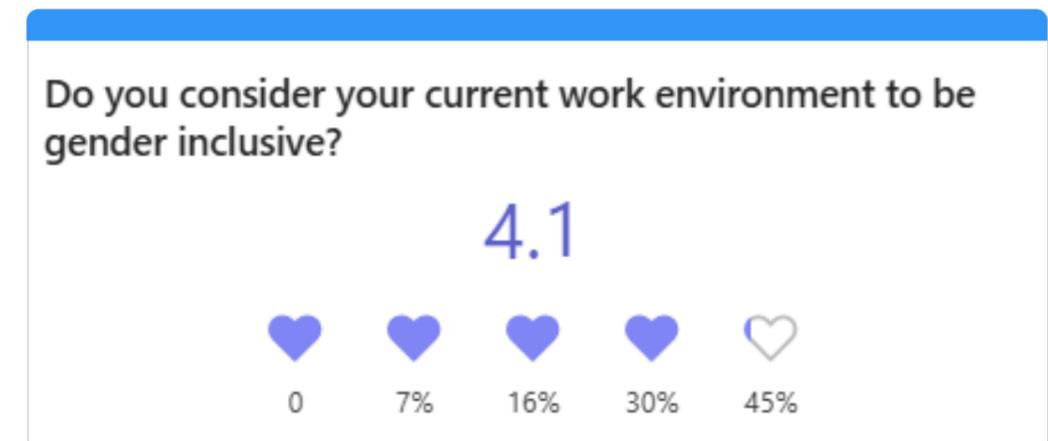
Karyn Gallant underscored the power of representation, sharing how exposure to women in leadership roles throughout her early career provided critical models for success and helped shape her own aspirations. She found that diversity fosters belonging, inspires retention, and creates visibility around the many possible career paths within the industry.

Together, the panelists agreed that the industry cannot afford to treat gender inclusion as a secondary issue. It must be embedded into hiring, development, leadership, and culture because organizations that reflect the diversity of their people and communities are more resilient, adaptive, and prepared for the future. The opening discussion was supported with a word cloud and rating poll to the audience.

Consistent with the panel discussion, key themes in the world cloud responses included:

- 1 Diverse perspectives drive innovation and better outcomes**
 Participants emphasized that varied viewpoints improve problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making, especially important for addressing the industry's complex challenges.
- 2 Inclusion, safety and belonging matter**
 A shared desire for respectful, supportive workplaces where everyone feels valued and heard, creating a sense of pride and belonging.
- 3 Equal opportunity and visible representation inspire change**
 Fairness, role models, and removing barriers were seen as essential to supporting career progression and encouraging the next generation.

Majority of attendees also consider their workplaces to be gender inclusive:





Barriers Hindering Progress

This section focused on identifying the structural, cultural, and behavioural barriers that continue to limit progress in gender diversity and inclusion within the mining sector. While some progress has been made, the panel agreed that persistent norms, outdated assumptions, and inconsistent leadership behaviors remain significant obstacles.

Jo-Anne Dudley observed that the cultural environment in operational and workshop areas has changed little over the last 30 years. Despite increased awareness, women continue to encounter exclusionary behaviors and are often required to adopt a “put up and cope” mindset to succeed. Jo-Anne also noted that similar challenges are experienced by LGBTQ+ employees and people from culturally diverse backgrounds, underscoring the broader need for inclusive workplace reform.

Graham Crook highlighted how many leadership roles in mining are secured through networks rather than structured, transparent processes. This entrenched system reinforces homogeneity at senior levels and limits the entry and advancement of underrepresented groups. He also pointed out that despite widespread corporate programs, female participation has increased by only around 1% per year, suggesting that many efforts treat gender equity as a compliance exercise rather than a strategic imperative.

Karl Lawrence discussed unconscious bias as a less visible but pervasive challenge. While many individuals and organizations express a willingness to change, deeply held assumptions often influence decisions and workplace interactions in subtle but meaningful ways. A lack of awareness can lead to exclusionary behaviors even when there is no intent to discriminate.

Karyn Gallant emphasized the gap between policy and behavior. She noted that while corporate standards often outline diversity goals, it is inconsistent day-to-day behaviors, particularly from leaders, that shape culture and determine whether workplaces feel inclusive in practice. A failure to understand the lived experience of team members, particularly women, can result in disengagement, attrition, and missed opportunities for development.

Throughout the discussion, the panelists agreed that workplace culture is rarely transformed by policies alone. True progress is hindered when organizations fail to address the informal systems, behavioural norms, and leadership inconsistencies that reinforce exclusion. While some high-level solutions were acknowledged, the focus remained on recognising and naming the barriers that must first be understood and addressed before meaningful progress can be achieved. The audience recognized workplace culture and hiring bias as the two prevailing barriers hindering progress, supporting the panels argument that culture is the underlying driver of change.

What do you believe are the most significant barriers still hindering progress on gender diversity in the mining industry? Rank the following in order of impact (1 being most impactful).

Workplace culture that does not support inclusion

Bias in hiring and promotion decisions

Leadership and executive resistance to change

Limited flexibility in rosters and working arrangements

Lack of clear progression pathways and poor retention



The Role of Leadership in Shaping Corporate Culture

Leadership was consistently identified as the most influential factor in shaping organisational culture and advancing gender equity in mining. Across the panel, there was agreement that leadership, whether formal or informal, set the tone for how inclusion, diversity, and respect are embedded within a workplace.

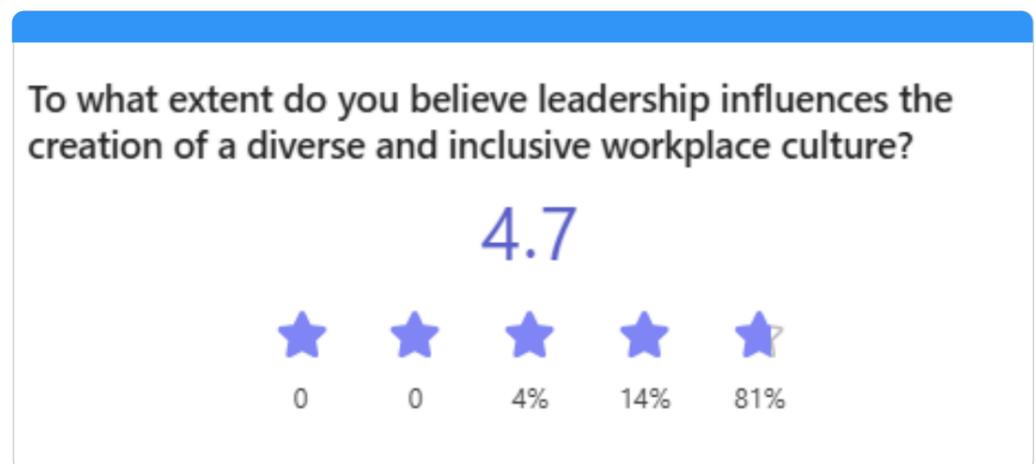
Karl Lawrence emphasized that leaders, whether at the executive or team level, are responsible for building inclusive teams and maintaining diversity as a priority throughout recruitment, development, and day-to-day decisions. He noted that without accountability, cultural damage can occur quickly and can be difficult to repair.

Jo-Anne Dudley reinforced that early leadership exposure significantly influences career pathways, particularly for women. She shared that in one workplace where the underground manager prioritised diversity, representation increased meaningfully. When that leader left and no frameworks were left behind, progress was quickly reversed. Her comments highlighted that without sustained commitment and structural reinforcement, gains in diversity can be fragile and temporary.

Graham Crook argued that leaders must be equipped to articulate not only the business and ethical case for gender equality but also their personal reasons for supporting it. When leaders fail to communicate the “why” behind inclusion efforts, well-intended initiatives risk becoming hollow or performative. He noted that benefits such as flexible working ultimately support all employees and must be framed as a value-add to the entire workforce.

Karyn Gallant drew a compelling parallel between diversity and health and safety. She observed that a shift in thinking is possible when consistent messaging is delivered at all levels, reinforced by training, behaviors, and expectations. She suggested that normalising inclusive language, behaviors, and accountability can embed diversity into the fabric of mining culture, just as safety has become second nature.

Throughout the conversation, the panel reiterated that leadership is not limited to executive teams. Managers at every level influence culture through everyday behaviors. When leaders model inclusive practices, support open dialogue, and hold themselves and others accountable, they establish environments where all individuals, regardless of gender or background, can thrive. The audience strongly agreed with the notion that leaders carry the most influence in developing a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture.





Key Implementable Actions to Support Women in the Workplace

The final portion of the discussion focussed on practical, implementable actions that individuals and organizations can take today to support women and drive inclusion in mining workplaces. While many of the issues discussed are complex, the panel strongly agreed that meaningful change is often driven by small, consistent behaviors applied with intention.

Karen Moffitt emphasized the importance of creating space for understanding by listening without jumping into problem-solving mode. She stressed that leaders and team members alike must listen with empathy, otherwise decisions are made through the lens of personal biases, rather than understanding the lived experience of others.

Graham Crook introduced a reframing of cultural fit, encouraging organizations to view workplace culture as an evolving system with room to grow and adapt, describing it as “an unfinished jigsaw puzzle.” He encouraged leaders to create environments where people can bring their full selves to work and add to the culture, rather than needing to conform to a rigid mould, noting Mark Henry, CEO of BHP was challenged recently in an annual general meeting by a shareholder that wanted him to ditch their DI targets. He said, “No, we’re not going to do that, the diversity in our business is now a competitive advantage and we are performing better as a diverse business than we were with this concept of meritocracy.”

Karyn Gallant reinforced the importance of listening to understand rather than to respond. She noted that by simply listening without interrupting or offering solutions, leaders create an environment of psychological safety where team members feel respected, heard, and supported.

Karl Lawrence echoed this, encouraging leaders to actively support quieter voices and reinforce inclusive values in one-on-one and small group settings. He highlighted the need for leaders to recognize contributions equally, regardless of gender or background, and to create environments where all team members feel comfortable speaking up.

Jo-Anne Dudley provided two takeaways, one systemic and one immediately actionable. She challenged site leaders to inspect basic facilities such as toilets and changerooms to understand the practical limitations placed on women, such as limiting water intake due to inadequate amenities. She also raised the need for more effective and safe reporting systems, where individuals feel empowered to raise concerns without fear of backlash, and where frontline leaders are trained to respond constructively and consistently.

The conversation concluded with strategies to elevate voices often overshadowed in meetings. The panel reflected on the need to amplify contributions, particularly when women or quieter team members are interrupted or ignored. Reiterating and crediting original ideas can significantly shift dynamics and ensure collaborative contributions are respected.

These strategies collectively help establish a more inclusive culture and demonstrate commitment to change. By adopting simple, conscious behaviors and ensuring systems reinforce equity, organizations can make meaningful strides toward creating workplaces where everyone can contribute, be heard, and succeed.

Conclusion

The International Day of Women in Mining event brought together a diverse and highly engaged panel and audience for an open, honest, and solutions-focused discussion on advancing equity in the mining industry. The tone throughout was overwhelmingly positive, with insightful contributions from both the panel and attendees. Notably, 40% of attendees were men, underscoring the growing recognition that gender equity is not a women's issue, it's a leadership and business issue. Their presence and participation in the conversation was both welcome and encouraging.

Across the discussion, several key themes emerged: the critical importance of listening with empathy, the need to move beyond outdated notions of "culture fit" to instead foster cultures of belonging, and the power of everyday actions like equitable meeting dynamics or improving site amenities. The conversation also highlighted the importance of evolving how we talk about inclusion, especially in light of shifting political and social narratives.

The event reinforced that lasting change comes not from grand gestures, but from consistent, visible commitment, supported by leadership, amplified by allies, and driven by inclusive cultures where everyone has a voice and a place. Ultimately, EQ wants to drive the momentum beyond a single day, and be a catalyst for real, practical change in our workplaces, with the event serving as an invitation to keep listening, learning, and leading with purpose.

Audience Questions

Q1: What can be done better to protect individuals who report issues within large organizations?

Protecting those who report workplace issues, particularly around harassment or culture, is a known challenge in large organizations. Although anonymity is often promised, true anonymity can be difficult to achieve, especially in small teams. One of the most effective approaches is to create safe, trusted spaces outside of reporting channels where issues can be raised informally, discussed, and actioned appropriately. Mentorship and networks of trusted advisors are also essential giving individuals someone to confide in, strategise with, and gain support from. Ultimately, it's about empowering frontline leaders to take ownership of culture and act consistently and fairly when issues arise.

Q2: Was the health and safety training mentioned earlier inclusive of mental health and psychological harm?

Yes. While much of the early safety training focussed on physical safety, many organizations are now incorporating mental health awareness and psychosocial risk into their safety culture. Particularly in sensitive or remote operating environments, training has evolved to address the broader well-being of workers, recognising that psychological safety is a key part of a safe workplace.

Q3: What does "success" look like in gender representation and inclusion?

Success can take many forms, from meeting numerical targets like gender balance (e.g. 50/50 or the 40/40/20 framework), to more qualitative measures such as improved workplace culture and increased retention of women. The panel agreed that retention is one of the most meaningful indicators. When women stay and thrive, it shows a sense of belonging and positive cultural fit. Long-term success also involves creating environments where inclusion is the norm, not the initiative.

Q4: How can young people entering the mining industry contribute to improving workplace diversity and inclusion?

New entrants to the industry can have a significant impact by staying true to their values, speaking up when things feel off, and choosing to work for organizations that value diversity. If a workplace is not open to change, there is power in choosing to leave and align with one that is. It's also important to reject the narrative that diversity hires aren't earned, these are highly qualified individuals who meet both technical and organisational needs. Lastly, young professionals should recognize their influence and actively contribute to inclusive culture by being open-minded and self-aware.

Q5: What advice would you give to young professionals, particularly women, entering the mining industry?

Keep an open mind and recognize that everyone brings different styles of communication and leadership. Avoid falling into the trap of believing confidence equals capability, some of the most talented individuals are quieter or less outwardly assertive. As a new professional, it's also critical to understand that biases, both conscious and unconscious, exist in all of us, not just in others. Be self-aware, challenge your own assumptions, and embrace learning from diverse voices around you.

Q6: Diversity isn't something taught at university. How can we instil better attitudes towards diversity in new graduates?

Diversity and inclusion should be normalised early as part of everyday industry culture. While formal courses may help, what's most effective is exposure. This includes industry leaders mentoring students, giving guest lectures, hosting informal conversations, and creating visible examples of inclusive leadership. Companies and individuals alike should engage directly with universities and early-career professionals to demonstrate that diversity is not a box to tick, but a core business strength.

Q7: Do young women leave mining at higher rates than men? What are we missing?

While hard comparative data can vary, there's consensus that retention, not just recruitment, is a major challenge. Young women are often lost due to cultural and systemic barriers. The issue is less about capability and more about workplace experience. Mining, like many industries, must do more to create environments where everyone feels a sense of belonging. With growing labour shortages and an aging workforce, retaining diverse talent is not only an inclusion issue, it's a business imperative.

Q8: How do we maintain momentum in DEI when broader political and social narratives are shifting against it?

While the global political climate may be leaning away from traditional DEI language, the core mission remains unchanged. What matters is belonging, ensuring every person can bring their full self to work. If certain terms have become politicised, the solution may lie in reframing: speak about fairness, safety, value, and authenticity. Organizations should continue the work, even if the words shift. We must be louder, not quieter, in conversations around inclusive culture because silence enables regression, and visible commitment inspires progress.



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