Welcome to the inaugural electronic newsletter of the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM). The newsletter will provide regular updates on the Centre’s research and teaching activities, along with news of upcoming events.

Who we are

The CSRM was established in late 2001, with funding support from the University of Queensland (UQ). We are part of the Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI) which embraces all of the centres and divisions within UQ that are involved in research with the minerals industry. We also have strong links with other areas of the University, including the School of Social Sciences, the School of Geographical Sciences and Planning, and the Business School.

We are strongly focussed on assisting the minerals industry to improve its social performance, particularly at the site level. We aim to do this by:

- conducting applied research on significant social issues facing the sector;
- developing analytical tools, information systems and metrics for application at site level; and
- providing education and training programs to the industry.

At present, most of our work relates to Australia, but we are also developing an Asia-Pacific focus.

Current activities

Recently we completed our first major research project, which looked at workforce turnover in fly-in fly-out mining operations. More information about the findings of that study is provided below, along with brief details of two other projects that are nearing completion.

On the education and training front, this semester we are teaching an online course entitled Community Aspects of Mineral Resource Development as part of a postgraduate program in Mineral Resources (Environment). We are also coordinating a first year Engineering course on Sustainable Development of Resources.

Looking ahead

Priority research areas for the CSRM over the next 12 months include:

- indigenous employment in mining;
- a comparative study of approaches to community engagement within the industry;
- the evaluation of company sponsored community development initiatives;
- improved methods for measuring and monitoring the community impacts of mining;
- further work around workforce turnover and the management of remote mining operations.

We also plan to offer training programs and regional level workshops for industry personnel working in the area of community relations.

Updates on these and other projects will be provided in future newsletters. We hope that you find this first issue informative and look forward to receiving your feedback and suggestions.

David Brereton
Director, CSRM

The CSRM’s website is at: www.csrm.uq.edu.au
The SMI’s website is at: www.smi.uq.edu.au
Managers need to be more attuned to the negative effects that high workforce turnover can have on mining operations, according to a recent research report by the CSRM and UQ’s Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre (MISHC).

The report, *Workforce turnover in FIFO mining operations in Australia: An Exploratory Study*, discusses the impact of turnover on mining operations, identifies the factors that are associated with high turnover, and suggests strategies for reducing turnover. The study is based on case studies of six northern Queensland and three Western Australian mines, with seven of these sites being fly-in fly-out (FIFO) operations.

The study found that turnover at the seven FIFO sites averaged 21% and was generally highest among professional and managerial staff. Most interviewees considered that employee turnover above 20% was detrimental to mine productivity. Despite this, the majority of the mines in the study were running with employee turnover at that level or higher.

The report’s principal author SMI Research Officer Ruth Beach, said that roster patterns clearly have an impact on employee turnover rates, mines operating in the same region on the same roster patterns could have very different turnover levels.

“The apart from rosters, management practices and workplace culture were important factors in why people stay or leave. It didn’t look like other job opportunities pulled people away from their current work, but more like factors in the workplace pushed them out. HR managers work really hard to find, train and keep good people on site. There’s a need for more of this sort of research to help them do that better.”

Ms Beach said it was surprising to find that none of the participating sites knew how much employee turnover cost their mine. “We did a quick estimate, using costing methods from studies undertaken in other industries. For a FIFO mine with 300 employees and an average rate of employee turnover, a conservative estimate of the costs is about $2.8 million per year. This figure does not include the cost of lower productivity due to the loss of local knowledge and the reduced efficiency of work groups.”
Current Projects

SOTA: Helping sites to improve sustainability performance

The focus of the SOTA project is on helping mining operations identify practical ways in which they can improve their social and environmental performance.

SOTA, which stands for ‘Sustainability Opportunity and Threat Assessment’, uses well-established risk assessment processes to review the performance of sites across a range of impact areas. A key component is a workshop involving site-based and corporate personnel, supported by UQ researchers. Participants are encouraged to think positively about ways in which the site in question can improve its sustainability performance, rather than the focus just being on the minimisation of risks.

To date, the SOTA method has been trialled at two locations in Central Queensland. At one of these sites the focus was specifically on water management issues; at the other, all aspects of the mining operation were reviewed, including relations with the local community. We are generally pleased with how the process has run, but a challenge for future applications is to increase input from external stakeholders.

The project is a joint initiative of the CSRM, the Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre and the UNEP Working Group for Cleaner Production in the School of Geographical Sciences and Planning. Financial support is being provided by the SMI and through the Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP).

A report to ACARP, including a workbook describing the SOTA process, will be available later this year. We will also be delivering presentations on the project to industry conferences and workshops (see forthcoming events).

Further information about this project and other SMI work in the area of ‘sustainability metrics’ can be obtained from Robin Evans (robin.evans@uq.edu.au).

SIMAC: Understanding Communities Better

The CSRM, in conjunction with the Queensland Centre for Population Research at UQ, has developed a user-friendly database to help government agencies, local authorities and companies monitor social trends in communities and regions where there is a strong mining presence.

The initial prototype of the SIMAC database (which stands for ‘Social Indicators for Mining-Associated Communities’) contains data for several towns and shires in Queensland’s Bowen Basin. Currently the database includes information about demographic patterns and trends, a variety of socio-economic measures (including employment, education and income), crime rates, and measures of service provision. SIMAC has been designed so that users can readily create customised graphs to show trends over time and compare individual communities in the region against each other and the statewide norm.

SIMAC is a very flexible application that can be used to store and present a wide range of data and can be readily tailored to local requirements. If you would like to know more about this project, or trial the SIMAC prototype, contact David Brereton at d.brereton@epsa.uq.edu.au.
Community engagement course offered

This semester the CSRM is delivering a course on Community Aspects of Mineral Resource Development in the postgraduate program in Mineral Resources (Environment), offered through UQ’s Centre for Mined Land Rehabilitation.

This is a flexible, online delivery course designed primarily for people who are already working in the minerals industry and associated government agencies, or who are interested in finding employment in this area.

The course provides students with knowledge and skills that will help them to understand, engage with, and contribute to the development of communities associated with mining operations. It covers the latest developments in the area of community engagement, including issues specific to indigenous communities, social impact assessment, community research techniques, and the evaluation of community programs.

The course will be offered again in the second half of 2004. For more details contact David Brereton d.brereton@epsa.uq.edu.au. To find out more about the programs offered through the Centre for Mined Land Rehabilitation, go to: http://www.cmlr.uq.edu.au/cmlr_education.htm, or contact Mary Patterson at m.paterson@cmlr.uq.edu.au.

Upcoming events


Ruth Beach will be presenting findings from the workforce turnover project. David Brereton will be presenting a paper on “A Risk Management Approach to Improving Sustainability, Performance at the Site Level”. For more details on this conference, go to: http://www.promaco.com.au/conference/2003/minesafe/.

SMI Round Table, 21 October 2003, Brisbane

In October the SMI will be holding its annual collaborative think-fest, the SMI Round Table. All research and teaching centres involved in the SMI will come together, along with representatives of key industry companies, mining organisations and government departments, to discuss the SMI’s research outputs and consider future directions. If you are interested in attending, please e-mail us at: csrm@uq.edu.au.

MCA Sustainable Development Conference - incorporating the 28th Annual Environmental Workshop, November 10-14, 2003, Brisbane

Ruth Beach, David Brereton and David Cliff (MISHC) will present a paper on “Employee turnover as a sustainability issue”. Water use as a sustainable development issue in coal mining will be the subject of a presentation by Robin Evans (CSRM) and Peter Roe (BMA). Jim Joy (MISHC) and Robin Evans will be taking a workshop on the application of the SOTA assessment tool.

For more details on the conference, go to: http://www.minerals.org.au/sustainable_development/sd_conf03.htm?menu=61&submenuid=61
RESEARCH AND CONSULTING SERVICES

By linking up with other research centres and schools within the University of Queensland, the CSRM is able to offer a wide range of research and consulting services, including:

- advising on community and stakeholder engagement strategies
- designing social performance indicators and monitoring and reporting systems
- constructing socio-demographic profiles of communities
- designing and evaluating corporate-community programs
- survey design and analysis
- assisting sites to review and improve their sustainability performance (see the outline of the SOTA project, above)
- research on workforce management issues (e.g. employee surveys, analysis of recruitment and retention data)
- developing tailored training courses and materials for the industry.

For further information about any of these services, contact David Brereton, on 07 33469223, or at d.brereton@csrm.uq.edu.au.

OUR ADVISORY BOARD

The CSRM’s Advisory Board provides strategic advice on the Centre’s work program, helps identify research and funding opportunities and provides feedback on the Centre’s work. Current members of the Board are:

External
Mr Ian Williams, formerly General Manager Mining, Pasminco (Chair)
Mr Peter Argust, Manager Sustainable Development, Comalco
Ms Hilary Chapman, Corporate Environmental Manager, Thiess
Mr Geoff Dickie, Executive Director Native Title Services, Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mining
Mr Mick Roche, Stewardship, Cannington Mine, BHP Billiton Minerals

University of Queensland
Professor Geoff Lawrence, Chair, School of Social Sciences
Professor Don McKee, Director, Sustainable Minerals Institute
Professor Michael Keniger, Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Physical Sciences and Architecture
PROFILE

CSRM Staff Members

David Brereton, the Director of the CSRM is a graduate of the University of Melbourne and has a PhD in Political Science from Stanford University. Prior to joining the CSRM late in 2001, David was Director of the Research and Corruption Prevention programs at the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission for eight years.

Robin Evans is a mining engineer with broad experience of the minerals industry from the varying perspectives of site operations, research provider and product supplier. He recently completed a project on technology transfer issues in the industry as part of a Master of Technology Management degree through UQ.

Ruth Beach has eight years research experience with the mining industry in the areas of shiftwork, fly-in/fly-out work (FIFO) patterns and workforce stability. She gained her Masters of Management from UQ in 2000 with her study on the family and organisational impacts of FIFO.

Tanuja Barker has research experience in the social and cultural aspects of resource management issues and holds a Masters from UQ in environmental management and planning. Tanuja is spending the next two months at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, where she is conducting research on the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in resource management. Her travel is being funded through a scholarship awarded by the Canadian Government.

CSRM’s First PhD Student

Petrina Czislowski completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sociology and a Bachelor of Laws at the University of Queensland, and practised as a lawyer before commencing her PhD in March this year. Petrina is undertaking a socio-legal analysis of new forms of regulation in the Australian Mining Industry to understand the complexities of how and why they have emerged, what is shaping them, and what they seek to achieve. Her research will focus on the Mining Certification Evaluation Project, the new sustainable development code that is being developed for the Australian minerals industry, and an example of a company-specific management system. Petrina’s research is supported by a top-up scholarship from CSIRO (Minerals) and CSIRO (Mining and Exploration).