

Digging up cash for mining skills

CAMERON ENGLAND



REWARDING: OZ Minerals senior mining engineer Scott Mariager. Picture: EMMA BRASIER/AAP

Scholarships to boost resources sector

A \$2 MILLION scholarship program to address a dire skills shortage in the resources sector has been announced, in a bid to attract students to mining and petroleum careers.

The State Government has kicked in \$1.2 million over five years backed by \$880,000 from industry, which will fund 20 two-year scholarships at the University of Adelaide annually. The \$20,000 scholarships will be administered by the Playford Trust.

Nationally, the mining sector currently has a pipeline of mining engineers which is only sufficient to meet about half of its needs, while the petroleum sector is also struggling to attract students, despite high rates of pay for graduates.

South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy chief executive Rebecca Knol said resources was now a hi-tech, innovation-driven field, which was a message which needed to be conveyed more broadly.

"As we strive to decarbonise our future, these scholarship recipients will be instrumental in shaping the modern world," she said. "The resources industry provides employment for more than 26,000 South Australians, yet we are experiencing a skills shortage of petroleum and mining engineers

"This is concerning for an industry that delivers \$6.4 billion in production, \$5.8 billion in exports and over \$300 million in royalties annually to South Australians."

OZ Minerals senior mining engineer Scott Mariager said his job was a technical, technology-driven role.

"I spend most of my time working with our computer modelling software which looks at the design and scheduling of the underground mine at Carrapateena (in Far North SA). The industry has changed so much over the years, there's a lot more technology and innovation involved than there would have been 10-15 years ago."

This has involved automating processes and removing workers from dangerous situations using remote technologies. OZ has been particularly innovative, drawing inspiration from US retail titan Amazon for new ideas and recently running a crowdsourcing competition to generate new exploration ideas to help find minerals in SA.

Mining and Energy Minister Dan van Holst Pellekaan said: "The scholarships are designed to foster a growing resources sector in South Australia which will help keep the best and brightest students in SA for much of their working lives."