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Industry Directions™

LGBTQA+ and the Industry of Minerals, Oil & Gas and Aggregates (MOGA): The Odd relationship must change

LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. It is an acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community.

Over the past decade, LGBTQIA+ people have gained more and more tolerance and acceptance, not respect in the same vein though in countries like India, especially in large cities. Nonetheless, most LGBTQIA+ people in India remain closeted, fearing discrimination from their families, who might see homosexuality as shameful. Discrimination is still present in rural areas, where LGBTQIA+ people often face rejection from their families and forced to opposite-sex marriages.

People in the LGBTQIA+ community are fighting for equal rights and acceptance. Trans people, especially, face a lot of difficulty in finding acceptance. People in the LGBTQIA+ community are looked down upon all the time. This is a major issue because discrimination against the LGBT community is highly prevalent.

Perceptions and Prejudice

People's prejudices lead them to think that LGBTQIA+ people are odd and very different. Today, homosexuality and queer identities may be acceptable to more Indian youths than ever before but within the boundaries of families, homes and schools, acceptance still remains a constant struggle for LGBT people. The stories are becoming common around us that the people coming out of the closet and declaring to their families that they are not the person their family expected them to be.

LGBTQIA+ individuals are merely individuals who have sexual preferences that differ from what would appear to be the 'norm', due to differing learned behaviours. Saying that it's objectively wrong for people to have sexual preferences that differ from the norm is objectively wrong itself. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution Article 15, 1949 reads that it is a fundamental human right not to face any kind of



discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

If normal men and women have the right to live in this society with respect then why not a person who belongs to LGBTQIA+ can live in this society with respect.

Reported LGBTQIA+ Bullying in mining

Bullying in the mining industry is pretty common. Wrongly, the exaggerated masculinity has been the long held identity of the industry. Slowly, but surely it is changing. The participation of women in the mining and resources sector has long been discussed, but more recently attention has been drawn to the experiences of workers who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI).

One of Western Australia's biggest mining companies, Alcoa, admitted the sector is not the beacon of diversity it should be. "We're typically known as a blue-collar, white, male-dominated organization and industry," said Michael Parker, Alcoa managing director. "When we used to talk about equality it was largely about gender, and today it's a lot broader than gender, and it's a side of the mining industry that people don't associate with us." Eight people represented Alcoa when it became the first mining and resources company to march in WA's pride parade five years ago.

A Personal Case

A senior electrical engineer Nyomi Taylor of ALCOA told her part of the story. For much of her 12-year career Ms Taylor said she battled a sadness, the cause of which she could not pinpoint. In 2016 Ms Taylor realised she had been struggling with her sexuality and identified as lesbian. The then 30-year-old said she felt confident enough to come out to her co-workers almost immediately because of Alcoa's involvement in pride, and its establishment of a support group called Employees at Alcoa for Gay and Lesbian Equality (EAGLE). "A lot of my straight friends have actually signed up to EAGLE as well," Ms Taylor said. "And they treat me the same regardless of my preferences. I'm just one of the guys." It has not all been smooth sailing though, as Ms Taylor said she still navigates some hostility.

LGBTIQ+ employees at mining giant Rio Tinto reported of higher rates of bullying and harassment at work, a major review of the company has found (<https://qnews.com.au/wouldnt-dare-come-out-lgbtq-workers-reveal-bullying-at-rio-tinto/>). The company commissioned the independent review, overseen by Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick. In her report, Broderick described

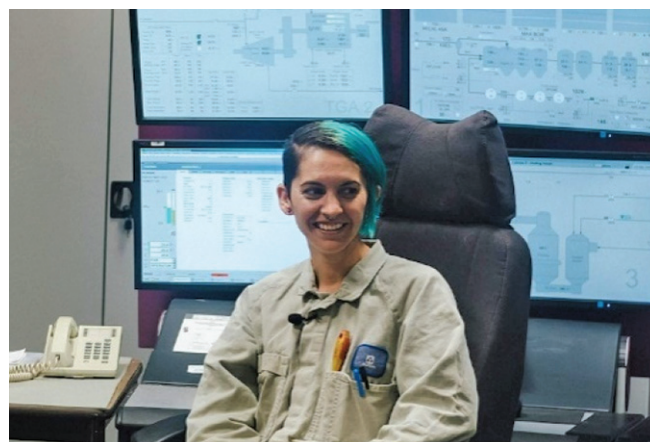


Figure 1: For most of her 12-year career Nyomi Taylor says she struggled with her sexuality.

bullying at the company as "systemic". Almost half of all employees reported they'd been bullied at work and described a "culture of silence" around bullying and harassment. Women are more likely to experience bullying than men, the review found.

Additionally, LGBTIQ employees reported "elevated rates of bullying, sexual harassment, and racism" in workplaces. 'I was bullied over and over again'. According to surveys and interviews, LGBTIQ+ employees experience higher rates of bullying (56%), sexual harassment (19%) and racism (17%) than those who do not identify as LGBTIQ+ (47%, 11%, and 11% respectively). Additionally, employees who "prefer not to say" if they identify as LGBTIQ+ also experience significantly elevated rates of bullying, sexual harassment and racism. One anonymous employee is quoted as saying, "The corporate environment is generally accepting of gay men, but it's a totally different story on the mine sites." A gay man said he "made myself more masculine while at work" in line with the "unhealthy masculine energy" on site. A queer female employee said, "I was bullied over and over again, 'You look like a boy'. It made it so much harder to come out."

One lesbian employee explained she was "often treated as one of the guys" on site. "They share their fantasies with you and are not afraid to make vulgar comments in front of you. Heaps of comments that "you just haven't met the right guy" and instances of men wanting to come back to your room," the woman said. She added that she "didn't feel unsafe though" but described the behaviour as "just frustrating." Another worker said, "I wouldn't dare come out here. I know I'd get bullied and teased, may be even physically harmed. I just don't trust these guys." Another explained, "It's hard to speak up against jokes because I'm not senior, I'm a person of colour and gay. Way too many barriers." In the report, Elizabeth Broderick explained, "Overall, [employee's] comments suggest that the same hyper-

masculine norms and culture that can fuel everyday sexism and sexual harassment can also fuel heterosexism, making the inclusion and safety of employees who identify as [LGBTQA+] a priority in any cultural reform.”

Over a quarter of women in the company had experienced sexual harassment, along with nearly half of women at FIFO worksites. They also spoke of the lack of consequences when they reported these incidents, Broderick explained. Twenty-one women have reported an actual or attempted rape or sexual assault in the last five years. Racism was also a “significant challenge” for employees at Rio Tinto worksites. Nearly 40 per cent of Australian men who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander had experienced racism. “I have copped racism in every single corner of this company,” one employee was quoted as saying. The review recommended 26 changes to Rio Tinto’s workplace culture to improve safety for marginalized employees. Rio Tinto CEO Jakob Stausholm apologised to all employees impacted by the “deeply disturbing” behaviour. “I offer my heartfelt apology to every team member, past or present, who’s suffered as a result of these behaviors,” he said.

This is not the kind of company we want to be

“I am determined that by implementing appropriate actions to address the recommendations.

“[With] the management team’s commitment to a safe, respectful, and inclusive Rio Tinto in all areas, we will make positive and lasting change, and strengthen our workplace culture for the long term.”

Working in mining is ‘an isolating experience’. Unions Western Australia Secretary Owen Whittle said the company had “clearly failed” workers over a long period of time and needed to do more to ensure the safety of resources sector workers. Reacting to the report, Western Australian Premier

Mark McGowan called on all mining companies to proactively address “poor” behaviour. “Working in the mining industry, particularly a long way from family and friends, is an isolating experience,” he said. “It shouldn’t be made worse by poor practices and poor behaviours”. “I’d urge every company to make sure they’re on top of these things to make sure they don’t occur.”

Leaders of the MOGA Industry and LGBTQA+ RioTinto’s adopted policy

On the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT), Rio commits that inclusion and diversity – and respect! – are not just something it is; it’s part of what Rio really strive to be, every day. ,, the support of LGBT+ employees is part of this effort. IDAHOBIT to Rio is a day to celebrate all of that. ... wanted to do something to demonstrate Rio’s values and our focus on inclusion – and also to show our support for Rio LGBTIA+ employees. Rio have supported the LGBT+ community for a long time. They offer benefits, including parental leave, to same-sex partners, for example. They have been hearing from our employees, who are telling us they would welcome Rio taking more opportunities to be more visible about the support and the values that underpin that support. So we listened (Reference: <https://www.riotinto.com/en/news/stories/swapping-red-for-rainbow>).” it’s really important to work in an organisation where people can be themselves. It takes energy to hide, and it’s hard to build connections with your workmates if they don’t know what’s important to you. Think about how you would answer “What did you do on the weekend?” if you didn’t feel safe talking about your partner, your family, or your community – just you” Vera Kirikova, Human Resources Group executive of Rio Tinto said.



Figure 2: Rio employees and their family marching in Perth Pride, November 2018