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Closing the gender gap

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We recently celebrated my favourite event on our sector's calendar — the Women In Resources Awards.

This annual event, which the Chamber of Minerals and Energy has run for 12 years, gives a snapshot into the growing role of women in our sector and their increasing involvement in leadership positions.

When WIRA started, it was a breakfast event expected to draw a crowd of 200 people.

Closer to 400 attended that inaugural event and it has since expanded to a gala dinner attended by nearly 1000 people.

Fortescue chief executive Elizabeth Gaines and Woodside senior vice-president Fiona Hick are two high-profile recent WIRA winners.

Both helped present the 2021 awards on March 5 to help present the 2021 awards, as the crowd heard winners' inspiring stories.

People such as outstanding young woman in resources winner Pooja Haria, who grew up in a poor family in Kenya, initially had her overseas studies financed by her community and then faced further setbacks that looked like leaving her in limbo.

With the help of lecturers and supporters, Pooja found a

way to persevere, graduated with honours in engineering and is now a vital member of the FMG team at Solomon.

Our outstanding operator/technician trade woman winner, Laura Allen, enthralled the crowd with her infectious personality.

Like Pooja, Laura was born overseas — migrating to WA from Ireland with her family

during high school — and had to overcome hurdles. But where she is today is so impressive — from becoming Woodside's first female registered person electrical, to supervising teams of 80 people offshore and stepping up as a delegate for the general manager of operations.

While WIRA is a celebration of the role gender diversity plays in our sector, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the work that still needs to be done. CME's most recent diversity report in 2019 showed women still made up only 21 per cent of our workforce.

Our target must be 50 per cent — the percentage of WA's population, which is female.

Events like WIRA shine a spotlight on the wide variety of jobs, career opportunities and leadership roles in our sector which are available to women.

**Paul Everingham is the
Chamber of Minerals and
Energy WA chief executive**