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## Fears grow over skills shortage

Kalgoorlie Miner, Kalgoorlie

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Regis Resources boss Jim Beyer has joined a chorus of voices expressing fears of a skills crunch in WA, admitting the goldminer was finding it more difficult to attract and retain staff amid border restrictions and as workers experienced COVID fatigue.

Speaking after the company reported a solid December-quarter production result yesterday, Mr Beyer said he had noticed a particular skills shortage in technical areas.

"I think the grind of a year of COVID travel restrictions is really starting to have an impact on people's availability," he said.

"We had, probably about three or four months ago, a couple of people, you could see, that life was getting pretty hard for them on a personal point, and so they left.

"They were running very long rosters and I can understand that.

"On one hand, the business is disappointed but from a personal point of view, it is hard for some people."

Fortescue Metals Group chief executive Elizabeth Gaines also expressed concerns in October about the impact of border restrictions on the mental health of the company's interstate-based fly-in, fly-out staff.

"We know the strain that it has caused to our east coast team members who we continue to support," she said.

Mr Beyer said Regis was monitoring the potential for skills shortages

to have an impact on its operating costs.

Mr Beyer said the company had experienced a spike in staff turnover since Christmas, but conceded that was not unusual for that time of the year.

His comments follow warnings from the WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry this month that an analysis of 30 current and approved projects in the State would require a workforce of nearly 17,000 over the next two years — demand not seen since the height of the resources boom.

The WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy has been sounding alarms about a looming skills shortage in the resources sector since August when it advised 8000 extra workers would be needed over the next 12 to 18 months.

Last month, modelling by the Australian Resources and Energy Group AMMA showed the number of people working in the State's resources sector would eclipse the peak of the mining boom by the end of 2022.

The resources employer group predicts direct jobs in mining and energy will reach the 121,000 peak of August 2012 within two years before growing by about another 4000 over the following four years.

The sector is seeing high demand for tradespeople and experienced technicians, frontline supervisors and maintainers such as heavy diesel fitters, as well as engineers, geologists, metallurgists and technology specialists.



**Regis Resources boss Jim Beyer fears a skills crunch.** Pic: Kelsey Reid