



01 FEB, 2021

Mining OK as FIFO workers 'essential'

West Australian, Perth

Page 1 of 1

Mining OK as FIFO workers 'essential'

DANIELLE LE MESSURIER

The State's powerhouse resources industry has narrowly avoided being impacted by the five-day lockdown, with the WA Police Commissioner deeming mining workers "essential" late last night.

WA's peak resources body was bracing for no outbound FIFO flights from Perth, Peel and the South West for the next five days, meaning that workers scheduled to start a shift this week would have been forced to remain at home.

But Police Commissioner Chris Dawson notified Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA chief executive Paul Everingham last night that new directions had been issued deeming mining and FIFO workers "essential".

Mr Everingham said he was "very confident" in the sector's health and safety protocols, which include temperature checks, and ensuring FIFO workers have a COVID-19 test before they board any flights.

The industry, which has generated royalties' windfalls for both State and Federal Governments over the past year from soaring iron ore prices, has traded uninterrupted throughout the pandemic.

WA's miners all moved quickly last year to introduce regular testing of its workers to ensure sites remained COVID-free.

Health Minister Roger Cook said the Premier's office had reached out to the mining industry to explore what they needed

to keep operations going.

Fortescue Metals Group chief executive Elizabeth Gaines said the company's incident management team met yesterday to consider the situation.

"We will work closely with all relevant authorities to ensure every precaution is taken to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 directly impacting our team, their families and the community," she said.

Association of Mining and Exploration Companies chief executive Warren Pearce said the industry was "prepared for the worst but hoping for the best". "We're hoping it's a short-term problem and that in five days time WA will be on top of this issue," he said.

"Hopefully sites will be able to continue operating with the people they've got already there."