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Women lead the way

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PAUL EVERINGHAM

A little less than two weeks ago we 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 been running for 12 years, gives a snapshot into the growing role of women in our sector and the increasing involvement of women in leadership positions.

When WIRA started, it was a breakfast event expected to draw a crowd of 200. Closer to 400 attended that inaugural event and it has since expanded into a gala dinner attended by nearly 1000 people.

Fortescue chief executive



Elizabeth Gaines and Woodside's senior vice-president Fiona Hick are two of the high-profile recent WIRA winners who

spring to mind. And both were on hand on March 5 to help present the 2021 awards, as we heard some of the inspiring stories of this year's winners.

People like Outstanding Young Woman in Resources 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 Laura Allen had the crowd enthralled 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 numerous hurdles to get to where she is today. 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's also an opportunity to reflect on the work that still needs to be done.

Even with the strides our sector has taken towards equality in recent years and growth in female participation in the past five years, CME's diversity report in 2019 showed women still made up only 21 per cent of our workforce.

I'd expect that figure to increase when the next report is undertaken, but our target must be 50 per cent.

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