

INTREPID PATHWAYS—LEE HASSAN

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Formal qualifications

BSc (Hons) (Geology) and PhD (Geology).

Current professional role & responsibilities

I am Acting Manager in the Mineral Resources section of the Geological Survey of Western Australia. I am responsible for assessing the prospectivity of areas proposed as conservation reserves, National/World Heritage listing or other land use which could potentially restrict exploration and mining, and am involved in negotiations to have highly prospective areas excluded from conservation reserves etc.

Current Employer - type

State Government.

Overview of career in the industry

I worked for 10 years as an exploration geologist first with EZ and then with Sons of Gwalia, had a break for 5 years after my daughter was born then joined the Geological Survey where I have been for 15 years.

EXPERIENCES WORKING IN THE RESOURCES SECTOR

If at any time you left the industry and came back, why did you leave, how long were you gone for and what motivated you to return?

I left because I had become a mother and was unable to go out bush anymore. I returned to work after 5 years when my daughter had started school but was unable to work in the field so took an office job with the Geological Survey.

What is the single most risky step you have ever taken your career? Did you find it paid off? Is there anything you would have done differently?

Accepting a 6 week contract with EZ in WA after completing my PhD in Melbourne. It paid off – I was with them for 5 years.

What would you say have been the most significant 'step changes' in your career pathway, and how have you adapted to these?

Joining EZ was one of the biggest steps in my career: I learnt how to live in the bush for 6 weeks at a time as well as applying all I had learnt in an attempt to find an orebody. When I joined

Sons of Gwalia, there were a new set of challenges. I was more directly involved in drilling programs and many drillers at that time had never come across a female geo so I had to gain their respect. When I joined the Geological Survey, I was frustrated by the amount of red tape, but the flexible work conditions were good and became even better as I and other women in the Department joined forces to make working conditions even more family friendly.

What have you found most rewarding about the industry and what would you most like to get out of your career in resources in the future?

When I was young, I really enjoyed working out in the bush and there was always the hope that I would find a big ore deposit. Now I take satisfaction in highlighting areas of high prospectivity and preventing them becoming locked up unnecessarily in a conservation reserve. My expectation is that I will continue to support the mining industry and try to find a balance between mining and conservation.

WORKING LIFESTYLE

What are your current work/accommodation arrangements?

Capital city based (with limited travel).

Do you have a preference for any particular working arrangement? What have your experiences with different types of arrangements been like?

At the moment capital city based is my preference. When I was young, I enjoyed travelling extensively where I was based in Perth but spent up to 6 weeks at a time camping in the bush (with EZ) and also enjoyed FIFO whilst I was with Sons of Gwalia usually flying up to Leonora for a week or two at a time then returning to Perth.

What changes or compromises have you had to make in order to balance family or other responsibilities or interests with a career in the industry? Have you found the right balance for you?

I had to give up field work once my daughter was born. Working for the Geological Survey enabled me to balance my career and family life.

Has your employer been open to negotiating changes to your role or roster to accommodate non-work interests or responsibilities?

Yes. The Department of Mines and Petroleum and earlier equivalents has encouraged women to put forward ideas on making the Department more family friendly

BEING FEMALE IN THE INDUSTRY

What challenges have you experienced by virtue of working in an industry that is predominantly male? Do you feel you have had to adapt to 'fit' the industry?

There was initially a reluctance to employ women because of lack of toilet facilities etc but I have always found that even at a mine site there is a ladies toilet in the office. When I did go out in the field with a male and either of us needed to go to the toilet we would just say that we needed to duck behind a rock or a tree and the other would look the other way. I don't feel that I have ever had to adapt to 'fit' the industry; I always try to be myself. I have found that if you treat people with respect, they will generally treat you with respect.

Do you feel that you faced any obstacles or discrimination by virtue of your gender in your career and if so, how did you address these issues in order to continue to progress?

Sometimes there was obvious discrimination at a job interview and it would be made plain to me that they wanted someone who would drink with the boys at the pub and I wouldn't get the job. The first company I worked for employed female fieldies as they found that they looked after the equipment better so it was a good company to work for. Drillers would sometimes make a comment about there being a lady geo but I always ensured that my drillholes were well marked out and got on with the job; they soon learnt to respect me often saying that I made life easier for them than a lot of male geos. When I first started work with EZ, the Geological Survey didn't even allow women in the field so I would never have considered working for them then. Even now, it is a very conservative organisation but gradually the women are whittling away at this male dominated organisation. Discrimination is now a lot more subtle but shows up in the number of women in upper levels relative to the lower levels.