

POSTED JUNE 2019

Creating a high-performance culture



By Nicole Madigan

Laura Tyler believes firmly in the importance of culture. 'It is the keystone for high performance,' she says. Without it, everything else falls away.'

Over the course of her career, people and culture have always been at the forefront for Laura Tyler, Asset President of BHP's Olympic Dam mine and the global company's Chief Geoscientist.

Her degrees in geoscience and engineering have led to her combined role and allowed her to lead and nurture a wide range of resources professionals.

'The scientists and engineers I work with are all curious about the world and how it works. They want to use their skills to solve the problems that will allow us to understand the world better, manage safety and business risks to the highest standard, and have a rewarding career.'

'I love their passion and engagement, and I try my best to enable their work, allow them to step up and to build connections between different technical disciplines and across commodities.'

Laura says one of her greatest joys is creating environments in which people can succeed beyond their own expectations. It is this sense of exciting potential that she is seeking to engender at Olympic Dam, a truly world-class orebody yet to be fully unlocked.

'We put significant focus on our people, making sure they are safe at work and building the culture we need to succeed. We have loads of technical experts and talented professionals, so raw capability is not an issue; culture is how we bring it all together.'

'Science and engineering's greatest steps forward have been the direct result of different disciplines coming together to try to understand a problem from different perspectives, and that's what I hope to achieve in my teams.'

Diversity is fundamental to success

Everyone who works in resources should be able to be their authentic selves and pursue fulfilling careers. This is the clear message that Laura is intent on spreading.

'Everyone has the right to bring their whole selves to work. This is not simply a moral pursuit – it's good business. BHP's own data shows that our more diverse teams are safer, more productive and achieve better outcomes because all their ideas and experience can be brought to bear on a range of issues.'

Laura believes diversity targets challenge the norm and can help to counter bias in hiring. As an organisation, BHP has an aspirational goal to achieve gender balance across its workforce by 2025. This is a challenge that the whole of BHP's leadership has stepped up to.

With targets, Laura also believes that male sponsorship of female candidates supports opportunity, that flexible work environments provide everyone with the ability to balance lifestyles and work effectively, and that everyone should have a personal development plan that encourages them to be their best.

So passionate is Laura about true diversity in the resources sector, she recently accepted a global executive co-sponsor role with Jasper, BHP's employee inclusion group for the company's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allies (LGBT+) community. The group's name was inspired by the jasper mineral – known for its unique multi-coloured patterns. This characterisation reflects the rich diversity of the LGBT+ community.

'Jasper is very active and seeks to improve the recruitment and retention of LGBT+ employees. I have tried throughout my career to develop diverse future leaders, but this has generally focused on women in resources. The Jasper group is teaching me so much about supporting and learning from people outside my own lived experience.'

'This role has given me insights into the way I can support our LGBT+ workforce, and how I can support all employees as we become more diverse and inclusive. It is a very rewarding team to be part of.'

'We have loads of technical experts and talented professionals; culture is how we bring it all together.'

Curiosity and passion

Laura's empathy and compassion for people, combined with an interest in rocks that began when she was young, is what drew her to the resources sector.

'As a child I collected rocks on every holiday. Coming from northern England, I spent most of my school holidays in Scotland and collected rocks that looked interesting. I now know that I collected them from some of the most significant geological terrains in the UK!'

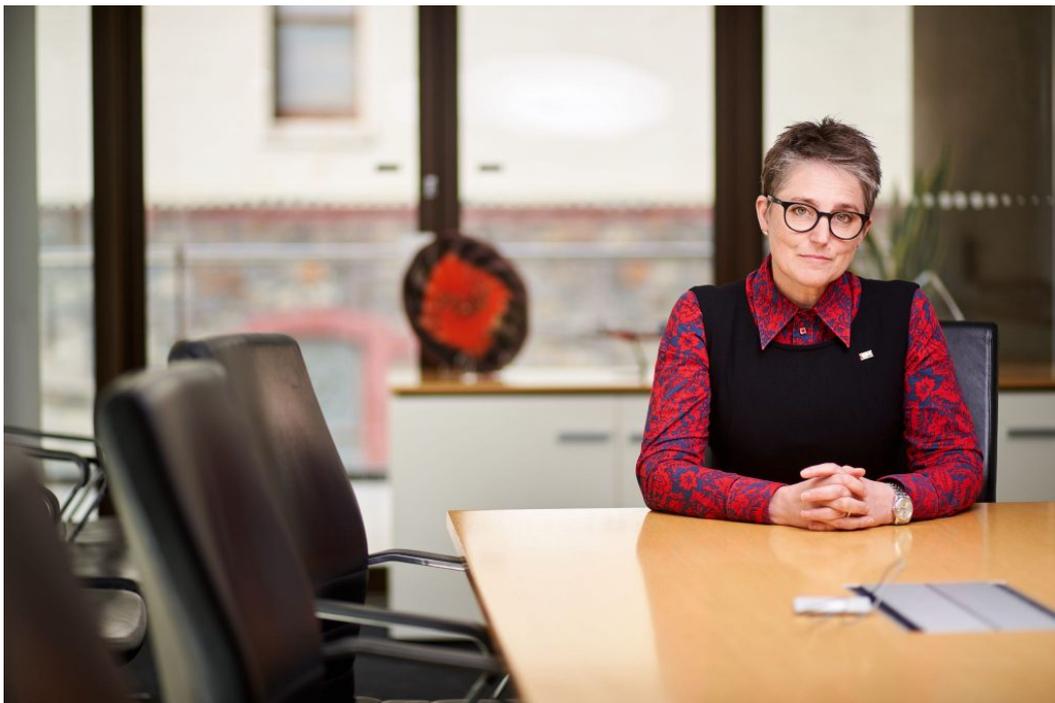
Laura says that she has always been curious about the world and how people interact with it – which led to her studying geology and mining engineering at university.

'Seeing how our industry supports communities, and our products support global development, has helped me to maintain my passion and connection to people.'

One of three daughters, Tyler was inspired by her mother, who, having left school at 15, believed education would enable her children to be the best they could be. It's a worldview Laura holds in high esteem.

'Our education has brought us each financial security and independence. This is something I value immensely, and it underpins my approach to my career and my support of flexible work.'

'I have embraced the opportunity to live and work with amazing people in some stunning parts of the world, and have been fortunate enough to work on truly world-class orebodies.'



Learning from the top

Prior to her role at Olympic Dam, Laura spent three years as Chief of Staff to BHP CEO Andrew Mackenzie, a role she says provided her with a very different view of the company. This included seeing first-hand how BHP works with its investors and external stakeholders, and how a management team works with its board.

'After 25 years in technical and operational roles, the Chief of Staff role gave me insight into another side of our industry and I believe the experience has made me a better leader and operator.'

'In Andrew, I also had the privilege of working with one of the leading geologists of his generation. There is never a dull conversation, whether it is talking about red bed formations, porphyry copper research, operational discipline or safety statistics – it is always lively and interesting.'

Raising the profile of geoscience

In February of this year, BHP announced that the role of Chief Geoscientist would re-join the company's executive leadership team. (Laura has held the role, previously titled Head of Geoscience and Resource Engineering, for a number of years.)

This was a big positive for the global miner's geoscience and resource engineering teams, and highlighted the importance of exploration and strategic resource management to the company's safety and growth agenda.

'I always aim to increase the visibility of technical and exploration work – the technical professionals in our industry contribute to safety and value outcomes every day.'

'We must celebrate them for their contribution and build rewarding technical career paths, as well as operational ones.'

Going for gold (and more) at Olympic Dam

While Laura's passion for her position as Chief Geoscientist speaks for itself, she says her role as Asset President of Olympic Dam is one of the most exciting and demanding of her career.

'The Olympic Dam orebody is world-class and it is technically fascinating, especially for a geologist, with more than 100 minerals identified by the geology team and a span that covers exploration, underground mining, processing and refining to output copper cathode and uranium oxide for global customers.'

'The people of Olympic Dam are committed to making the asset a success, and as a team we will enable them to be able to do their jobs safely so that we can reliably deliver safe copper, uranium, gold and silver to market at low cost.'

In 2018, Olympic Dam, with the nearby community of Roxby Downs, celebrated its 30th anniversary. It was a significant milestone and an opportunity for the mine and the town to reflect on their shared past and be excited about the future.

'Olympic Dam is genuinely a multi-generational asset. The daughters and sons of our original workforce – some of whom are still working here – have joined the team, which is wonderful to see.'

'It is humbling to be given the opportunity to lead Olympic Dam. We are working hard to set up the asset for the next 30 years of safe and reliable production, to take advantage of increasing global demand for copper.'

'We are doing this through people capability and development, a new operating system and the application of new technology for the mine and surface operations.'

Making connections

A committed member of AusIMM for more than 20 years, Laura says her involvement has allowed her to connect with fellow professionals around the world.

'AusIMM has provided me with a technical community and long-lasting friendships – the social events put on by the Mount Isa branch are legendary!'

While Laura is passionate about her career, she's also fiercely dedicated to her family, whose changing needs have influenced how she has worked, the positions she's accepted and the places she has lived.

But with some imagination and a lot of perseverance, the family has made it work.

'Our dog still gets me out on the trails around our home, I always have a garden and I still do some knitting to keep my hands busy while we watch movies as a family.'

One of the benefits of the itinerant lifestyle typical of many modern resources careers is the opportunity to work around the world, something that Laura and her family have experienced.

'We have lived in different climates and as a family we have always joined in with the local passions – I have fished, skied, biked and camped across the globe. Although I never quite got the hang of surfing.'

Laura says one of her proudest accomplishments is the balance she has achieved for herself, her family and her career.

'This balance has allowed me to build and lead teams that are diverse, safe and productive; have a family life that is fulfilling; and live in some amazing parts of the world.'

'This is a long way from the market town I grew up in, and a world away from the experiences I expected to enjoy at work.'

'I have learnt from my mistakes, have enjoyed seeing the people I work with achieve what they thought was impossible, and have loved the experiences I have had along the way.'

'I am passionate about the place of mining in improving world living standards, and continue to be intrigued by innovation across all aspects of our industry – bringing the potential for an ever-safer and more productive workplace.'

'This is a fast moving, innovative, demanding industry, but the rewards are immense and friends are life-long.'

Advertise with us
(<https://www.ausimmbulletin.com/advertise-with-us>)