

# GENDER, MINING AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

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‘Mining Women’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract

Claire Williams’ (1981) seminal research *Open Cut: The Working Class in an Australian Mining Town* along with studies ‘Hewers of Cake and Drawers of Tea’ and *Two for the Price of One: The Lives of Mining Wives* by J.K.Gibson-Graham (1996) and Linda Rhodes (2005) respectively represent significant contributions to knowledge about gender and mining in rural Australia. This paper revisits the key findings of these studies in light of data from recent research in Ravensthorpe, a rural shire in the south-west of Western Australia. In 2004 BHP Billiton announced that a large scale nickel mine would be established in the area with a substantial residential workforce. This residential workforce includes a large number of women with various relationships to the mine. In this paper we investigate these relationships by drawing on data from interviews with women in the shire in 2008. These interviews suggest that the ‘mining woman’ of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is far more heterogeneous than the portrayals of her in the past.

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