



Mining scientists rocked by slowdown

CARA JENKIN
 CAREERONE EDITOR

GEOLOGISTS hunting for the state's newest mineral deposits are having a tough time finding work themselves.

The nation's mining sector – a booming industry as little as two years ago – now has up to 1000 professional geoscientists who are unemployed or underemployed.

The Australian Institute of Geoscientists says the global financial crisis has slowed exploration as companies delay new projects.

It is concerned geoscientists will turn to other industries to collect a steady pay cheque, leaving a shortage of qualified workers when exploration activity resumes.

Its research shows 31 per cent of professional geologists and geophysicists in SA are underemployed, with 80 per cent of those unemployed. Nationally 18.7 per cent of geoscientists are underemployed, of whom 47 per cent are unemployed.

Institute vice-president Andrew Waltho said it was important to bring new mining projects on stream to replace those that came to the end of their life.

“The impacts of that are probably a bit more pronounced in a state like South Australia, where mining is such an important industry,” he said.

“Every time there’s a downturn in exploration, we lose 20 to 40 per cent of people in the profession.”

South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy chief executive Jason Kuchel said State Government subsidies had helped get work for many geoscientists.

“In the next 18 months ... the industry will be screaming for people because there has been a very substantial shortage,” he said

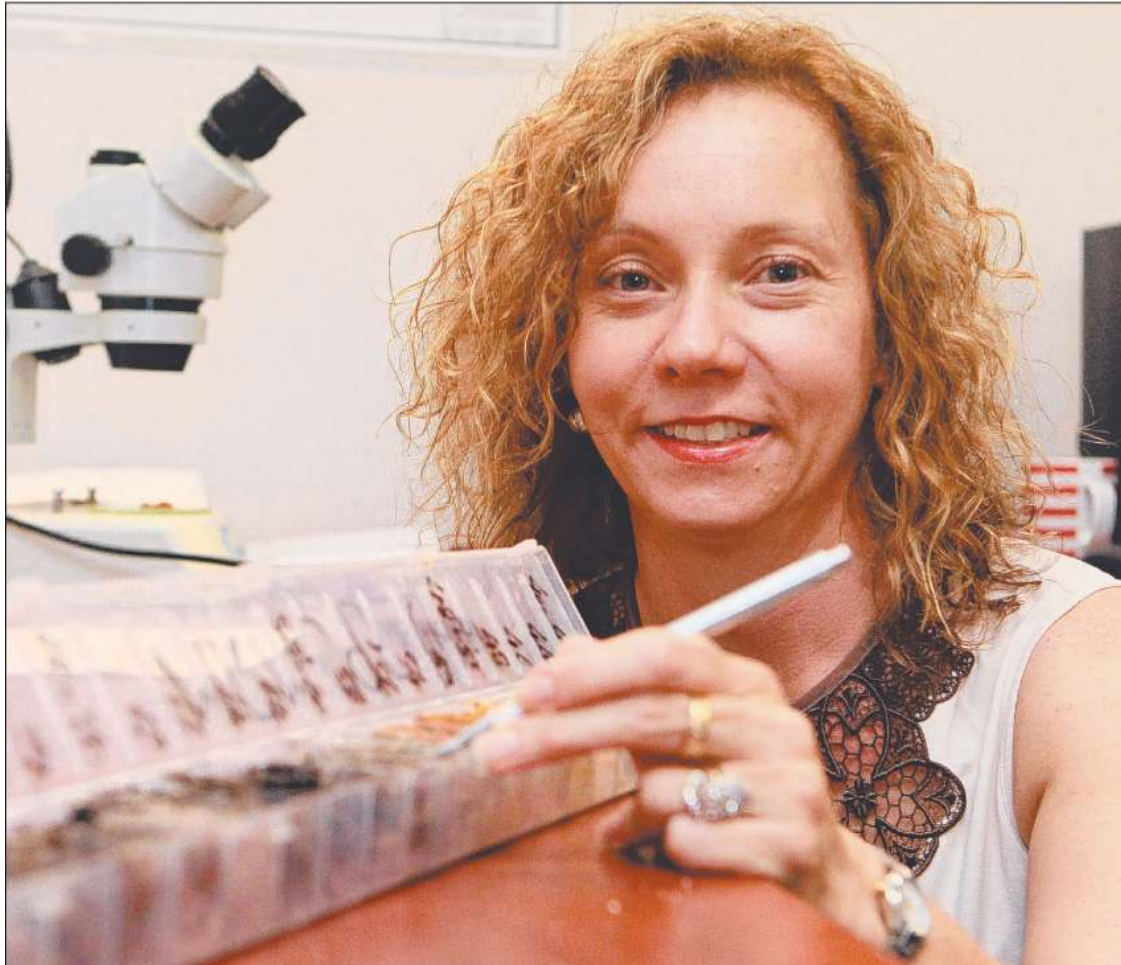
Retrenched geoscientist Nicole Galloway-Warland had trouble finding work in both Western Australia and South Australia for six years before starting as exploration

manager at UraniumSA in 2006.

“There’s still guys out there looking for work,” she said. “I think it’s going to improve, but it’s going to take some time.”

“ Every time there’s a downturn in exploration, we lose 20 to 40 per cent of people in the profession.

- JASON KUCHEL



EXPLORING OPTIONS: Geoscientist Nicole Galloway-Warland struggled to find work for six years before joining UraniumSA