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Encouraging diversity a gas at SP AusNet

Western Victoria's natural gas distributor SP AusNet is challenging industry stereotypes by recruiting highly skilled females into traditionally male-dominated roles, including one engineer who has played a key role in making our natural gas networks more reliable.

Graduate Gas Engineer Sylvia Low developed a five-year strategy involving technology that monitors gas pressures to ensure a reliable delivery to customers' homes and businesses. Her work resulted in the project being extended to encompass SP AusNet's entire gas distribution network.

Ms Low set her sights on a career in the energy industry while completing her chemical engineering degree.

"SP AusNet provides the perfect platform to explore the energy industry. Its field rotations program gives me exposure to the different areas of the gas engineering industry and allows me to develop a broader base of skills," Ms Low said.

"SP AusNet is incredibly supportive and really encourages showing initiative to overcome problems," she said.

Career development and progression is a key factor for many people, something SP AusNet is aware of and actively seeks to encourage in a constantly changing industry.

SP AusNet employs over 1,500 employees while owning and operating Victoria's electricity transmission network, the electricity distribution network in eastern and northern Victoria as well as the natural gas distribution network in the west of the state.

SP AusNet's General Manager People and Safety Geraldine Leslie said the power company recognised the value of diversity in its workforce.

"Having a more diverse employee base encourages a wider range of thinking and means we have access to a broader set of skills and talents," Ms Leslie said.

"As an organisation that relies on its people to deliver services to our customers, we feel it's important to have access to the entire talent pool," she said.

In November 2009, SP AusNet received an Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency Business Achievement Award for Outstanding Equal Employment Opportunity Practice, in recognition of its commitment to employee diversity.

To ensure employee diversity is maintained, the SP AusNet Diversity Initiatives Group (DIG) was formed to transform the company into an attractive employer for all members of the workforce. Through the efforts of DIG, SP AusNet was recently recognised by the Australian Breastfeeding Association as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace.

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