

EMPLOYMENT STEADY

Worst is over for resources job losses

■ Kim Macdonald

One of the State's leading employment forecasters says the worst of job losses in the cooling resources sector is over, with the workforce set to plateau for years.

The latest labour market update by Pit Crew Consulting shows the resources workforce has contracted by about one-fifth since its peak at the beginning of this year.

Principal Peter Dyball believes the workforce will remain steady until about 2015, provided a handful of major projects earmarked for development come to fruition.

Modelling based on 81 projects — 56 started and the rest in the pipeline — show the number of engineering resources jobs is about 10,000, down from the peak of 13,000 this year.

Mr Dyball said the modelling showed that employment among this group of workers, which includes engineers and safety personnel, would remain steady until at least 2015. Modelling shows the construction workforce has also fallen from a 35,000 peak this year to almost 27,000 workers.

Mr Dyball forecasts a minor contraction of about 1000 construction workers before 2015, helping to

maintain a relatively steady blue-collar workforce. However, he predicts that general cost-cutting on resources projects could have a bigger impact on other industries, leading to job losses in catering, supplies and logistics.

He did not have specific predictions for non-resources industries but agreed with Treasury prediction that WA's unemployment rate could grow to 5.75 in 2014-15.

"It's fair to say the worst of the easing resources workforce is behind us," he said.

"This depends on some degree of reaching final investment decisions on a few projects between now and the first quarter of 2014. That should see employment flatten off to a high-level plateau."

Mr Dyball said Gina Rinehart's Roy Hill project, a couple of developments earmarked by Rio Tinto and works attempting to remove bottlenecks at BHP Billiton projects were needed to ensure the workforce remained steady.

WA's unemployment rate last month was steady at 4.6 per cent but 12,000 jobs have been lost this year. Treasury figures show the jobless rate is tipped to average 5 per cent this year before rising to 5.75 per cent in 2014-15.