



AMMA MEDIA RELEASE

20 May 2010

MODERN WORKPLACES NEED MODERN WORKPLACE LAWS

Resource sector employers from across the nation have today called on both sides of the political divide to modernise the nation's existing workplace laws to better reflect the needs of the sector.

Australian Mines and Metals Association [AMMA] Chief Executive, Steve Knott, [said](#) a combination of international competition and recent pressure being brought onto the sector by the Government's proposed 40% mining tax meant operators needed a workplace regime that better allowed the sector to negotiate directly with their employees in order to both attract and retain them.

"We were assured before the last election Australia would have in place a system which allowed employers and employees to undertake practical negotiations which reflected both party's needs, while at the same time protected employees from a small minority of unscrupulous bosses who in the past used the laws to cut wages and conditions," Mr Knott said.

"That commitment has not been delivered by the Labor government - and unfortunately, this comes at a time when the sector faces the prospect of tens of thousands of workers existing employment arrangements being due to expire in coming years,"

"Unless the problems of the existing system can be fixed then we face the unenviable prospect of significant disruption in our workplaces," Mr Knott warned.

"Modern Australian working families and their employers face different challenges today in terms of getting the work-life balance right. As such, our employees have different demands of their employers - demands which cannot be accommodated by blunt legislative instruments and proscribed and restrictive collective models."

"Let me make it unequivocally clear. We are glad that all sides of the political divide accept the fact that Work Choices is now dead," Mr Knott said.

"In particular, employers in the resources sector, a sector which has been paying on average nearly double the national wage, continue to be painted as being in the same league as that small minority of employers who took advantage of the 2006 amendments to the laws.

"Such activity, by activists with a political agenda, is disappointing - particularly when the resources sector is leading the charge on innovative measures to both attract, retain and remunerate its workers,"

"But rather than resting our future on merely overcoming the errors of the past, we need our political leaders to look to the future, and put in place the legislative and regulatory frameworks that foster growth, assisting the sector to meet the challenges of the future and create more Australian jobs," Mr Knott said.

Mr Knott said in order to meet these challenges employers needed to directly engage with prospective employees in order to negotiate the terms of their employment prior to the commencement of employment.

"Employers and employees have to be allowed to sit down and negotiate basic things such as consultation on major workplace changes, dispute resolution, classifications and minimum wage rates, ordinary hours of work, maximum weekly hours, and annual leave."

"It's time for the law to catch up to the nature of the modern employee/employer relationship," he said.

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