

MEDIA RELEASE

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Union and industry leaders debate Fair Work laws

Resource industry company executives and leading union movement figures will meet on the Gold Coast this week to debate and discuss their views on a range of issues including the country's workplace laws, skilled migration and employment.

Steve Knott, Chief Executive of resource industry employer group, AMMA, said rather than having a forum where like-minded individuals meet to simply preach to the converted, AMMA's 2011 National Conference program was designed to generate robust debate and an exchange of ideas between leading employer representatives, union leaders and industry commentators.

As well as employer representatives from across the nation's resource organisations, senior union officials also participating in the two-day Conference include:

- Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) National Secretary, Jeff Lawrence;
- Assistant Secretary of Unions NSW & Director of the Sydney Alliance, Amanda Tattersall;
- National Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), Dave Oliver; and
- National Secretary of Australian Workers Union (AWU), Paddy Crumlin.

"Over recent years we have seen the industrial relations pendulum shift from one side of the political spectrum to the other," Mr Knott said.

"Such a shift presents both challenges and opportunities to employer and employee representatives alike.

"Given the fundamental importance of practical day-to-day workplace relations practices to achieving Australia's overall productivity goals, it is vitally important there is ongoing commitment to reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of the Fair Work Act.

"Such a commitment is clearly in the nation's long term interest, as well as in the interest of both employers and employees alike.

"The Workplace Relations Minister's recent public declaration he was not prepared to accept any change to the current legislative regime would, I believe, have been equally disappointing to employer representatives as it was to union representatives."

Mr Knott also said a modern and progressive workplace relations system requires a commitment to not only address present issues, but to consider the views of both employers and employees.

"Given the resource industry faces massive workforce challenges in the next few years - whilst at the same time being fundamental to the financial underpinning of the Federal Budget - we sincerely hope to see the Minister adopt a more accommodating stance towards employers and their concerns," Mr Knott said.

Other industry commentators and representatives speaking at the Conference include Ian Smith, CEO of Newcrest Mining and Terry Burgess, Managing Director and CEO of OZ Minerals.

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