

MEDIA RELEASE

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Regional development key factor in FIFO debate

STRONGER policy decisions to support and co-ordinate regional development could ease community concerns around 'fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) workforces, according to resource industry employer group AMMA.

AMMA is calling for enhanced incentives to localise workforces in regional towns, but has welcomed the Queensland government's acknowledgement that FIFO arrangements are an ongoing reality in the resource industry.

As the Federal Government launches its inquiry into the use of FIFO practices, AMMA Director Minna Knight said the resources sector has greatly contributed to development in regional areas where there are existing mining operations.

"The reality is the sector is facing a critical labour shortage and using a FIFO workforce is often the only viable way to fulfil employment needs," said Ms Knight.

"Many of the rural towns across Queensland and Australia involved in this debate were historically built off the back of previous mining booms and that correlation with regional development is something the resource industry is proud of, and remains committed to.

"But with limited schooling and child-care options, sub-standard roads and minimal infrastructure in some regional areas, it's understandable the majority of workers in the industry are reluctant to relocate their families when FIFO options exist.

"The incentives are often not there for permanent residency and it's important for all levels of government to review existing services and infrastructure where communities wish to entice workers to live in a particular area.

"Appropriate government funding must be allocated for regional development to sustain future population increases driven by resources projects."

In addition to infrastructure development, tax incentives for workers taking residency in regional mining areas is another possible initiative that could strike a more favourable balance between FIFO and local workers.

AMMA (the Australian Mines and Metals Association) will submit key information to the Standing Committee On Regional Australia's inquiry into the use of FIFO on behalf of its extensive membership base.

"Sensible policy-making is crucial for the future of FIFO workplace practices and its role in easing the critical skills shortage in the resource industry," said Ms Knight.

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