

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **'Transparency and inclusiveness' key to restoring faith in Fair Work Australia**

A STREAM of ex-union appointments to the Fair Work Act Tribunal and broken policy promises has eroded employers' confidence in Australia's industrial umpire, according to resource industry employer group AMMA Chief Executive, Steve Knott.

In officially opening the Industrial Relations Society of Victoria Convention last night, Mr Knott argued a more transparent and inclusive appointment system is vital to restoring industry's faith in Australia's IR framework.

"Since Labor was elected to form government, eight of 10 new appointees to Fair Work Australia have had union backgrounds. Of the three most recent appointments made in September this year, again two had union backgrounds," Mr Knott said.

"In AMMA's view, having experience in running a private sector business will assist the overall functionality of Fair Work Australia by facilitating practical decisions based on commercial and economic realities.

"With more than two million actively trading businesses in Australia, compared to 1.8 million trade union members, it beggars belief that the government could find no-one suitable from private enterprise to appoint to the tribunal."

Due to the greatly enhanced role of Fair Work Australia compared to the previous system, in which the tribunal again rules on dispute resolution and agreement approval, Mr Knott said the appointments potentially have 'a more profound impact on the Australian economy than was the case under previous IR laws'.

The AMMA boss cited a number of 'surprising and unheralded tribunal interpretations' in his speech, in which he calls for broad legislative reform including a more transparent and inclusive system for tribunal appointments.

"Both the Federal Government and the Opposition are still talking of doing little more than tinkering with the Fair Work Act as it currently stands," Mr Knott said.

"This is despite the fact that over the past two years it has become obvious it needs major overhaul, especially if stakeholders are to maintain confidence in its ability to foster economic growth or at least not impede it.

"With Fair Work Australia continuing to hand down decisions causing unease in the business community, partisan appointments are now more than ever a retrograde step.

"AMMA would like to see the Federal Government continue the spirit of consultation that was so evident in the lead-up to the introduction of the Fair Work Act, especially in such a vitally important area with the potential to impact so dramatically on community confidence."

**ENDS**

Read Steve Knott's full presentation at the AMMA website ([www.amma.org.au](http://www.amma.org.au))

**For all media requests including interviews and photographs**

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