

MEDIA RELEASE

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Government and Opposition address skilled migration in resource industry

NATIONAL resource employer group AMMA has called for strong political resistance to ongoing union campaigns criticising skilled migration, as Immigration Minister Chris Bowen and Shadow Minister Scott Morrison outlined their respective positions to a room of resource industry employers this morning.

AMMA executive director, industry Minna Knight said the resource industry is concerned about the potential influence of 'misleading and divisive' union campaigns on the federal government's skilled migration programs.

"The introduction of the Enterprise Migration Agreement (EMA) program was a welcome step in response to the small but important strategy to use skilled migration to help overcome our industry's skills shortages in the short term," Ms Knight said.

"It is concerning for the future of our industry that this positive policy announcement is still being undermined by divisive and self-serving union campaigns.

"For Australia to secure the long-term employment and economic benefits from our resources projects, we must have the right policy settings in place to ensure the industry's productivity isn't further undermined by restricted access to skilled and capable workers."

Speaking at the AMMA Migration and Labour Sourcing Conference in Brisbane this morning, Minister Bowen again reiterated that skilled migration is an important part of the government's commitment to creating long-term local jobs.

"A government that cares about promoting job creation and economic growth must ensure that skilled migration is calibrated to fill those skills gaps that simply can't be filled locally," Minister Bowen said.

"The key benefit of EMAs is to assist project owners to plan their workforce needs and mitigate any risk that projects won't be able to source sufficient skilled workers to be completed on time and budget.

"By helping to secure finance, EMAs will also secure thousands of jobs and significant training opportunities for Australians, because without EMAs there is a real risk that some large resources projects simply won't go ahead.

"(Roy Hill) is precisely the sort of project we envisaged when designing the EMA program: one of vital national significance that will add considerable benefit to our economy."

Minister Bowen followed a presentation by Shadow Immigration Minister Scott Morrison, who said he supported the EMA program and 'felt sorry' for Bowen when the Prime Minister publicly withdrew her support for the policy.

"The government's EMA policy is perfectly suited for this (Roy Hill) project. Caving in to union pressure and particularly from Paul Howes, the Prime Minister completely hung our immigration minister out to dry," Mr Morrison said.

For all media requests including interviews and photographs

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