

Mr Shorten, please let 87% of Australian workers enjoy their lunch in peace

FURTHER enhancing union right of entry provisions to Australian workplaces would create the conditions for the 87% of Australian private sector workers who actively choose not to join a union to be constantly badgered by union bosses to sign-up for membership.

Resource industry employer group AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association), says workplace relations minister Bill Shorten's proposed changes to the Fair Work Act 'are pandering to union bosses at the expense of Australian workers'.

"The prospect of unions having automatic access to lunchrooms fails to accept contemporary reality that more than 87% of Australian private sector workers are actively choosing to not be associated with a union. These people deserve to have their lunch in peace," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"We are already seeing a situation in which more trade unions are entering more sites more frequently to compete for members. Following recent signals from the government, the resource industry was hopeful that these very real concerns would be addressed, but in reality the proposed reform is heading in the opposite direction.

"The proposed changes show little knowledge of how major resource sites operate. The cost and complexity of chaperoning union recruiters around an onshore site, with thousands of workers and multiple lunchrooms, is considerable and unreasonable.

"We are also very concerned at proposals that employers must facilitate union visits to offshore and remote locations. The proposal is that employers should accommodate helicopter joy rides for union bosses to offshore oil and gas rigs, despite the considerable costs and unacceptable safety risks.

"Oil and gas platforms are not tourist sites or playthings for union salespeople; they are a place for highly specialised operational workers who have undertaken weeks of intensive safety training, including underwater helicopter evacuation procedures.

"It lacks any sense of reality or balance to propose employers be required to subsidise union travel costs to such locations, but also accommodate the massive safety and management controls that must be put in place both prior to and during such visits.

"It can also be several days before a helicopter is available to return a union official to shore. A more practical solution is for unions to meet with their members at the onshore helipads, which they are already doing, and they are welcome to continue this practice."

Mr Knott says the resource industry also has 'great concerns' with proposals for compulsory arbitration on new project agreements, known as 'greenfields'.

"We question the capacity of industrial tribunal members, the majority of which have never been responsible for running a commercial business undertaking, to help bring multi-billion dollar resource project to the investment approval stage and project commencement," he says.

"It is clearly the responsibility of management to make these decisions, not trade unions or industrial tribunals. With decades of wealth generation and thousands of Australian jobs in the balance, these projects are too important to risk getting it wrong.

MEDIA RELEASE

“Further changes to our workplace relations system must increase our national productivity and competitiveness.

“Unfortunately, the current government’s constantly unbalanced approach to its workplace relations laws aims only to increase trade union rights at the expense of inhibiting workplace productivity.”

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