

## **Offshore oil and gas platforms are not playgrounds for union salespeople**

AMMA, Australia's national employer group for the mining, oil and gas industries, is deeply concerned that the federal government's workplace reform agenda remains focused on the privileges of union bosses and increasing business costs, rather than addressing the fundamental flaws within the Fair Work Act identified by its own review process.

Changes proposed to parliament today through the *Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013* include greatly expanding union visitation rights to Australian workplaces. AMMA has called on a proper Senate Inquiry process into the Bill, which it says 'is rushed, ill-thought out and has not been subject to the proper policy impact assessment processes'.

### **Union access to offshore oil and gas projects**

The proposed changes will facilitate union officials to access highly specialised remote sites, including Australia's offshore oil and gas platforms.

"New capacities for unions to enter remote worksites, including offshore oil and gas platforms, are completely unrealistic. These proposals ignore the complex safety, productivity and operational realities of the resource industry," says AMMA CEO Steve Knott.

"These hydrocarbons sites are highly specialised operational activities often occurring 100 kilometres offshore. Complex oil and gas platforms are not tourism sites for onlookers or industrial playgrounds for union salespeople.

"Offshore oil and gas workers are in the top 5% echelon of Australian pay and conditions. The employees often have their own nominated site safety representatives or a nominated union representative where appropriate.

"Underpayment of wages is simply not an issue and communication with onshore employee representatives already happens freely through Skype and internet facilities.

"Issues include safety, relevance, efficiency and productivity impacts. These are critical to the viability of Australia's multi-billion dollar oil and gas projects. Helicopter transport costs alone could incur a \$30,000 bill on some projects, and that's before factoring in extensive productivity losses, indemnity issues, OHS risks and operational disruptions.

"Proper supervision of union visitors will take workers away from critical functions, including health and safety officers who are both highly skilled and well remunerated. Their well regarded and in-demand skills are best focused on adherence and improvement to safety procedures, not chaperoning union recruiters on what could be week-long campaigns.

"With on-site numbers limited and often at capacity, we are concerned that potential industrial pressure may result in union salespeople being accommodated on an offshore platform at the expense of highly skilled and well remunerated technical workers.

"These employees could be forced to wait until union officials return to shore before being able to get to their workplaces.

"A more appropriate location for union officials to sell membership to offshore workers is onshore at the helicopter pads or airports. This is already occurring successfully because the workers can be practically addressed in large groups, not chased around a complex oil or gas rig."

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Union lunchroom access: “Non-union workers deserve to eat their lunches in peace”**

AMMA's members are also concerned that providing unions with daily access to lunchrooms will create conflict with the 87% of Australian private sector workers who choose not to join a union.

“Major resources project often sites contain multiple contractors, multiple lunch rooms and multiple trade unions all competing for membership. Making lunchrooms the mandatory place for union business could create serious workplace conflict and disruption,” Mr Knott says.

“During a 12-hour shift, resource industry employees spend their meal breaks enjoying lunch and having a rest. Some are more interested in reviewing the financial pages of the newspaper than hearing a union sales pitch.

“Currently, if a union believes an allocated meeting room is not suitable for their business they can access Fair Work Australia to make a determination. This system should be retained not changed to an unfettered intrusion on workers rest areas.

“There are far more suitable meeting places for unions to conduct their business than in the lunchrooms of workplaces where people are attempting to rest and eat their meals.

“The overwhelming majority of Australians who choose not to join a trade union deserve to have the sanctity of their meal breaks to be protected.”

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