

MEDIA RELEASE

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Government's silence is deafening as union blocks Tasmanian freight activities

THE silence from both the Australian Government and the Labor/Greens state government has been deafening as Australia's maritime union continues to illegally blockade Tasmanian sea freight activities, says resource industry employer group AMMA.

AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association) says it is deplorable that a Supreme Court injunction had to be sought by a stevedoring company to end the Maritime Union of Australia's picketing of the Tasmanian economy's key passageway to the mainland.

Protesters today defied the court order by stopping *The Spirit of Tasmania* from unloading its freight at a Melbourne dock, continuing the week-long disruption of Tasmania's maritime sector.

"The Prime Minister and Workplace Relations Minister claim their workplace system strikes the right balance and minimises disputes, yet this week have been silent as unlawful union activities shut down the Bass Strait's main transit seaway," says AMMA CEO Steve Knott.

"It is unacceptable that it was left to an individual company to secure a Supreme Court order to stop ongoing disruption of the passage of goods through Tasmania's main seaborne route. This is akin to standing idly by as trucks are blocked from using the Pacific Motorway.

"Where was the leadership from either the federal government or the Tasmanian Government to take action on such an important matter to the state?"

Mr Knott notes Tasmania has the country's highest unemployment rate at 8.1% and is highly vulnerable to disruptions in its trade activities across the Bass Strait.

"The MUA's actions in defying a Supreme Court order and disrupting Tasmania's most important economic passageway are both unlawful and completely irresponsible," he says.

"It is also misleading to claim this is a community issue when the protest is clearly occurring in pursuit of the union's industrial agenda. This is no excuse for irresponsible and unlawful behaviour that has disrupted the transit of produce out of an entire state."

Just weeks ago at his National Press Club address (July 11), Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said there was a 'reasonable balance' in Australia's workplace system and that industrial disputes were at low levels.

Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten similarly continues to ignore business concerns about a Fair Work system that props up union influence in Australian workplaces and fails to hold unions to account for unlawful and irresponsible activities.

"The Prime Minister has ignored concerns from the business community that Labor's workplace system has provided too much influence and too many privileges for unions," Mr Knott says.

"This week's union blockade of *The Spirit of Tasmania* is now a lost opportunity for the government to make a statement that unlawful and socially irresponsible action by unions cannot be tolerated in a modern and competitive Australian marketplace."

Media Contact: AMMA media manager, Tom Reid on 0419 153 407