

MEDIA RELEASE

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Resource industry to work with ALP frontbench towards new policy approach

*Statement by Steve Knott, chief executive
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AUSTRALIA'S national resource industry employer group, AMMA, today congratulates ALP parliamentarians on their appointment to Opposition Leader Bill Shorten's frontbench.

The resource industry was greatly impacted by the previous ALP government's heavy-handed approach to economic, taxation and employment policy. However, we genuinely share in a vision for Australia to be a great place to invest, do business and employ people.

AMMA hopes to work with the Opposition on positive, forward-thinking new policies that will encourage the government to even better support a globally competitive resource sector.

We are confident Bill Shorten's newly appointed frontbench will learn from the ALP's recent past and again engage in meaningful, positive and mutually respectful policy discussions with Australia's business community, particularly the resource industry.

Shadow Minister for Resources, Gary Gray

Gary Gray is highly respected throughout Australia's resource industry and we warmly welcome the continuity of retaining him in the critical resources portfolio.

We look forward to what Mr Gray can achieve in Opposition and through working with the government to support growth and job contribution in Australia's resource industry.

In recent years the resource industry has benefited from the political leadership of both ministers and shadow ministers with a strong understanding and appreciation for our sector. This includes Ian Macfarlane in resuming his former Howard Government responsibilities, Mr Gray retaining the role in Opposition, and the exemplary work of his predecessor Martin Ferguson.

Our sector appreciates the respect extended by both the Coalition and ALP through these highly qualified appointments, but notes strong leadership in the resources portfolio must be supported, not undercut by other critical policy areas such as workplace relations and immigration.

Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Brendan O'Connor

Mr O'Connor is an experienced parliamentarian who takes on one of the Opposition's biggest challenges in trying to restore confidence in Labor's workplace relations credentials.

His challenge is to throw off his existing trade union shackles and harness the spirit of creativity and foresight that saw the Hawke/Keating government fundamentally reform our system and deliver lasting economic and jobs growth.

Mr O'Connor needs to bring to this task not only a fundamental reset in Labor policy, but a reset in how he approaches his responsibilities.

If Shadow Minister O'Connor cannot prove more independent of his former union colleagues than he demonstrated in his short time in the Immigration portfolio, he will be ill-prepared to deliver the policy renewal his party desperately needs.

Mr O'Connor also needs to demonstrate a far greater commitment to evidence-based policymaking than he showed as Minister for Immigration.

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He cannot afford to concoct or assume evidence as he did with his baseless claim of 10,000 rorts of the 457 visa system, and he cannot afford to bludgeon through fundamentally flawed approaches, such as the reintroduction of labour market testing for 457 visas.

While recognising the ongoing role of trade unions in many workplaces, we urge Mr O'Connor to also consider how major resource industry projects have been delayed through a sole reliance on collective union bargaining, despite representing just 13% of private sector employees.

Notwithstanding our reservations following Mr O'Connor's recent record on industry consultation, AMMA and our members are keen to play our part in Labor's policy reset and will judge Mr O'Connor's performance in this role moving forward.

We hope to work with Mr O'Connor to return the ALP's policies to the sensible centre and to better balance the priorities and interests of union members, non-union members and employers.

Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Richard Marles

Mr Marles is well known and highly respected by AMMA and the wider business community, particularly for his work with Australia's Pacific neighbours, and takes on a significant challenge in the immigration portfolio regarding skilled migration.

After a year marred by unfortunate rhetoric, misguided re-regulation and divisive union campaigns, we look forward to working with Mr Marles as he rebuilds Labor's credibility on skilled migration through a positive new approach based on facts and its contribution to Australia.

For the sake of our industry, economy and social fabric, skilled migration must be valued by all our policymakers and the right arrangements put in place to support the needs of the economy and labour market, not perceived short-term political advantage.

Mr Marles has the experience and impartiality to appreciate that we can no longer afford to say one thing on trade and economic cooperation, while imposing punitive administrative requirements on skilled migration and flirting with century-old industrial xenophobia.

Like Mr O'Connor, a significant part of Mr Marles' challenge will be working with both employers and trade unions to redevelop Labor policy, and avoid becoming snagged in short-sighted thinking and union platforms divorced from community expectations and values.

Steve Knott this week presented the resource industry's perspective and policy priorities on skilled migration to an AMMA member forum. [Click here](#) for a synopsis, the full speech and slides.

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