

MEDIA RELEASE

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Royal Commission will shine overdue light on union corruption

(Australian Mines and Metals Association)

AUSTRALIA'S resource industry employer group AMMA welcomes today's commencement of the Royal Commission into trade union governance and corruption, and release of terms of reference.

AMMA chief executive Steve Knott says employers, employees and trade unions should actively support the Royal Commission as an opportunity to stamp-out unacceptable breaches of the trust of Australian working people, and of the country's laws.

"The Royal Commission is essential to restore confidence in Australian trade unions, particularly for the one in eight private sector workers who choose to join and financially support them," Mr Knott says.

"Those who have complied with the law have absolutely nothing to fear, and should actively cooperate with and support the work of the Royal Commission.

"It will compel employers, employees and union representatives to provide witness evidence and finally remove the shield of legal privilege from wrongdoings and cover-ups.

"Separate from this Royal Commission, it is already established that industrial relations in the Australian construction industry is plagued by unlawful conduct and a lack of respect for the law. AMMA once again strongly urges Labor and the Greens to support immediate measures to combat lawlessness in this industry.

"Labor and the Greens must stop standing in the way of the reestablishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). They should instead pass the legislation and work with the current government to show a united front to stamp out illegality in this sector once and for all."

Mr Knott also repeated calls for both union and employer representative bodies (known as Registered Organisations) to be subject to the same rules as those operating under the Corporations Act.

"AMMA has voluntarily operated as a corporation for 96 years, and can see no reason why all employee and employer organisations should not also do so," he says.

"For the financial and administrative obligations of unions and employer groups to fall under separate rules and regulations, with lesser penalties and laxer enforcement, creates an impression that they benefit from some 'special IR club' for insiders.

"It also gives the impression that corruption by union officials is a lesser evil than business wrongdoing, and that the financial contributions of (often lower paid) working people do not warrant the full protection of our laws.

"The 18% of Australians who are union members should have the same confidence that shareholders and investors enjoy under the corporations law that officials are not illegally benefiting from their hard-earned funds."

MEDIA: Contact Kylie Sully on 0409 781 580 or kylie.sully@amma.org.au.