

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tough budget must be backed by workplace reform, says resource industry

TO BUILD a stronger economy the tough budget measures unveiled tonight must be backed by long overdue reforms to our nation's workplace relations system, says Australia's resource industry employer group AMMA.

"While tax increases are unwelcome, hard decisions are necessary to return stability and sustainability to Australia's budget position," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"However while it is making tough decisions in Australia's long-term national interest, AMMA calls on the government to not squib the issue of increasingly urgent workplace relations reforms.

"Tonight's budget measures must be supported by wider reforms that increase business confidence and make Australia a more attractive place to invest and create jobs.

"As our national productivity and competitiveness increasingly comes under a global spotlight, the pace of workplace reform in recent times has simply been unacceptable."

AMMA, the employer group for Australia's resource industry, has long called for action on:

- Laws empowering unions to strike over matters that have nothing to do with the employment relationship.
- The expanded capacity for unions to intrude uninvited into workplaces, resulting in employers receiving hundreds of entry requests which are no more than union membership fishing expeditions.
- Reversing the ALP's union monopoly on wages and conditions for new resource industry projects, resulting in excessive costs and stalled productivity that has damaged Australia's reputation.

"Budget policy and our employment laws affect all Australians and their job opportunities. These challenges are now pressing and we cannot miss the opportunity to take action as part of accelerating the course back to a budget surplus," Mr Knott says.

"AMMA calls on the senate to support immediate reforms on new project agreements, excessive union site entry, unnecessary strike action, and lawlessness in the construction industry by restoring the ABCC.

"More fundamental workplace reforms should also be considered well prior to the pending Productivity Commission review and the next federal election.

"The sooner we take action, the sooner we can improve employment in this country and create the jobs required to meet the demographic and expenditure needs of our future."

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