



Miners call for reform of industrial relations system

The Australian Mines and Metals Association believes reform to the national workplace relations system must be a New Year's resolution for the federal government.

As the peak resource industry employer group, the Association wants "fundamental" reform to meet the country's "mounting economic, employment and social challenges".

Resource employers are currently navigating falling commodity prices, tapering investment, workplace strikes and strike threats and Association executive director, Scott Barklamb, said Australia cannot afford its workplace relations system "to become a millstone around the neck of our economy and community".

"The warning signs are clear. Investors are increasingly viewing Australia as an expensive place to do business, are concerned at our capacity to deliver projects on time and budget, and are concerned

about reduced productivity," Mr Barklamb said.

"The International Monetary Fund has warned if Australia doesn't significantly improve its labour productivity, we will fail to maintain growth in living standards over the coming decade.

"The World Economic Forum ranks Australia in the top echelon of countries on health, education, economic regulation and the rule of law, but among the bottom on cooperation in labour-employer relations, flexibility of wage determination, hiring and firing, and linking pay and productivity."

The Productivity Commission recently announced a review into Australia's workplace laws.

The Association said the review "should expose how the Fair Work Act is failing workplaces, employers, employees and the community, and identify options for a better system."

On behalf of the resource industry, the Association is commissioning research in to the economic and employment impact of Australia's current approaches to several workplace issues. This includes looking at damaging strikes and threats to strike; what can be included in an employment agreement, and in union logs of claims; when and how unions can come on to work sites; employment terms and conditions for new major resource projects and new options for individual agreement making.

"There is nothing fair in regulation that puts jobs at risk, threatens living standards, and reduces the capacity for young people to get a job," Mr Barklamb said.

"This should include reconsidering legislation already before the parliament. A positive start to 2015 would be the urgent passage of the workplace reform bills currently stalled in the Senate."