

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Palaszczuk Government should leave Queensland's work safety laws alone**

*AMMA – Australian Mines and Metals Association*

THE Palaszczuk Government's proposed changes to Queensland's work health and safety laws to provide unions unfettered workplace access would create an environment 'rife for misuse of entry privileges', national resource industry employer group AMMA told a parliamentary inquiry.

This week AMMA appeared at a hearing for the Queensland parliament's [Inquiry into the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015](#), where it reiterated concerns outlined in its submission on behalf of the state's resource employers.

The Bill proposes to reverse the previous Newman LNP Government's amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) that took effect in May 2014. It seeks to overturn a provision requiring union permit holders to give at least 24 hours' notice to enter Queensland workplaces to investigate alleged safety breaches.

"AMMA supports a well-resourced inspectorate exercising appropriate powers to investigate alleged safety breaches. We do not support handing unions unrestricted access to worksites," says AMMA senior workplace policy adviser Lisa Matthews, who appeared at the inquiry.

"Unions have a role to play in workplace safety that includes consulting with and advising members on safety issues. However, that role should not automatically extend to the immediate triage of incidents without appropriate notification.

"This is particularly relevant to safety critical resource operations where management, authorised inspectors and emergency teams must be able to immediately respond, investigate and act on serious incidents if and when they occur. Other less serious issues should be brought to the immediate attention of management."

AMMA highlights that Australia's other prominent 'resources state', Western Australia, would abstain from the same right of entry provisions that are proposed in the Queensland Bill.

AMMA also has concerns with the Bill's proposed reinstatement of the power of elected health and safety representatives to order work to cease.

"While elected health and safety reps have a role in consulting with members of their work group, they should not be empowered to order work to cease. The potential for such powers to be used for industrial purposes is obvious," Ms Matthews says.

"Everyone has a common law right to stop work if there is an imminent risk to health or safety, without being directed to do so by a health and safety representative. Our members have made a sustained cultural effort over many years to create an environment where all employees immediately identify, assess and act on safety risks. We are concerned these proposed changes would create a culture of 'leaving it to someone else'."

The changes implemented to the Work Health & Safety Act in Queensland by the former state LNP government followed a wide-ranging review and consultation with stakeholders.

[Click here](#) to read AMMA's full submission to inquiry.

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