

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## ChAFTA an urgent test for the Opposition

*(AMMA – Australian Mines and Metals Association)*

NATIONAL resource industry employer group, AMMA, calls on the Labor Opposition to heed the clear message from the Chinese Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Mr Ma Zhaoxu, that our country needs to act quickly to secure the significant economic and employment opportunities of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA).

AMMA executive director, policy and public affairs, Scott Barklamb says Australia must not waste its opportunity to steal a substantial march on our global competitors, and to lock in preferential trading arrangements with our most important trading partner.

“Ambassador Ma is correct in describing the ChAFTA as a win-win for both nations. As the Chinese leadership, the Australian Government and the Opposition are well aware, this is an excellent deal which will allow Australia to secure the highest levels of access to this massive market for our exports, goods and services,” Mr Barklamb says.

“It will create jobs for Australians, including our children and grandchildren, and increase our living standards for decades to come - but only if the negotiated agreement is rapidly ratified when parliament resumes.”

As Ambassador Ma delivers his address on the 100<sup>th</sup> day since the ChAFTA was signed, Mr Barklamb says the enormity of what Labor is risking should not be underestimated.

“The Chinese leadership must be incredulous that Australia is not seizing with both hands the opportunities ChAFTA promises. As a nation we should be embarrassed that our alternative government needs to be reminded of what is at stake if we let this opportunity slip through our fingers,” he says.

“If ChAFTA does not proceed, our competitors will be only too quick to take up the preferential opportunities we have negotiated.”

With legislation to ratify the ChAFTA expected to be considered in parliament next month, Mr Barklamb says Opposition leader Bill Shorten will be tested on his economic leadership credentials.

“The ChAFTA legislation is where national economic leadership starts to get very real for Mr Shorten,” he says.

“This is a test of his capacity to make decisions for all Australians, rather than for the vested interests of the union movement. It is a test of actions rather than spin.

“The Opposition must decide whether they want to take instructions from the CFMEU and thereby become complicit in a fundamentally xenophobic campaign singling out Chinese labour, or instead demonstrate maturity and vision, act in the national interest, and help deliver more jobs and better living standards for generations of Australians.”

**MEDIA:** AMMA's comments follow Mr Ma Zhaoxu's address to the Australia China Business Council/ China Chamber of Commerce in Australia on the evening of 29 September. For further comment, contact Kylie Sully on 0409 781 580 or [kylie.sully@amma.org.au](mailto:kylie.sully@amma.org.au).