

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **ChAFTA comment: Labor is failing a test of leadership**

*AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association)*

The Opposition is failing working Australians and the wider community by continuing to oppose the China-Australia Fair Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), and should urgently commit to passing this vitally important deal for our national prosperity, says resource industry employer group AMMA.

"Australia needs our political leaders to show our region and the world that we are a mature and capable country, able to seize trading opportunities and competitive advantages. For Labor, this is a real test of its maturity and claims to be an alternative government," says AMMA CEO Steve Knott.

"Bill Shorten needs to distance himself and his party from the xenophobic China-baiting coming from sections of the union movement. He needs to demonstrate leadership and show Labor is capable of supporting jobs and living standards for all Australians."

Mr Knott says the Opposition should listen to the Australian people, state and territory leaders, and respected Labor figures such as Bob Hawke, Bob Carr and Warren Mundine who overwhelmingly support the ChAFTA.

Under Keating, Labor spearheaded Australia's engagement with Asia. Under Whitlam and Hawke, Labor had a proud record of tariff reform and leading global free trade. Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard then delivered FTAs with Malaysia, New Zealand, Chile and ASEAN.

"For the first time in decades Labor is standing in the way of new trade opportunities for Australia, and risks being tarnished by the xenophobic campaign unions are waging against our biggest trading partner and the birth country of hundreds of thousands of Australians," Mr Knott continues.

"Labor's professed concerns on Labour Market Testing lack foundation. Existing FTAs, including those negotiated under Rudd and Gillard, covered the same ground on working visas, with not a peep.

"Mr Shorten needs to push back against the CFMEU and show Labor will not be a party of Sinophobes – that it is capable of making decisions for the future of all Australians and is not a party beholden to xenophobic union bosses.

"If he fails to do so, intentionally or not he is helping unions flirt with racism and risks a preferential deal with the best possible trading partner for Australia.

"Australia will long rue the missed opportunity if the ChAFTA does not proceed and our competitors take up the opportunities we have worked towards for a decade. The responsibility for such a failure would lie squarely at the feet of the Labor Opposition."

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