

MEDIA RELEASE

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Workplace relations breakthrough a boost for resource investment and jobs

Statement on the passage of the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014

THE resource industry's employer group, AMMA, congratulates the Government and the Senate on today's passage of important amendments to our workplace relations laws, including reforms that will help secure new resource industry projects and bring more jobs and investment to this country.

"Crossbench Senators have shown they are willing to help tackle fundamental problems with our workplace relations legislation," says AMMA executive director Scott Barklamb.

"Employers will now have a mechanism to progress new project agreements when bargaining with trade unions stalls, while also ensuring employees are not disadvantaged."

[Analysis](#) from KPMG (commissioned by AMMA) found the Fair Work Act's greenfields agreement system "has resulted in costs and delays to major projects in Australia in recent years". Today's amendments will provide a safety valve, allowing the Fair Work Commission to approve an employer's proposed agreement if a deal cannot be reached. Presently, such agreements remain in limbo or the employer is forced to concede to exorbitant union demands just to get the work underway.

AMMA continues to have concerns at the test for such agreements; that they meet or exceed 'prevailing industry standards'. The impact and validity of this requirement will be tested as Australia competes for future investment within tightened global markets.

"We also welcome the Senate voting to close a loophole in the bargaining system that allows unions to take strike action before genuine bargaining has commenced," Mr Barklamb continues.

"This will finally see an end to the ridiculous 'strike-first, talk later' bargaining tactics of some unions.

"The resource industry is however very disappointed that other important reforms did not pass, including removing the artificially inflated rights the previous government gifted unions to enter workplaces, greater individual flexibility, and clarification on when annual leave loading is payable when leaving employment."

AMMA looks forward to today's passage of the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014 creating a more positive and constructive environment for further workplace reform.

"Australia is increasingly confronting a collision between the approaches imposed by the Rudd-Gillard government in 2009 and the realities of doing business and keeping people in work in 2015," Mr Barklamb says.

"Today's amendments must be the first step in overhauling the Fair Work Act, to better support the interests of employers and employees, and the wider Australian community.

"The resource industry welcomes this progress as a demonstration that the Senate is capable of meeting this challenge when it engages with how our workplace relations laws actually operate in practice and sees through deliberate misinformation and scare campaigns."

AMMA Executive Director Scott Barklamb is available for media interviews on this topic.

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