

MEDIA RELEASE

21 June, 2016

Public interest test for union mergers to safeguard nationally significant projects

AMMA – Australia's resource industry employer group

A NEW public interest test for future trade union amalgamations will provide critical Australian commercial activities, such as the construction of nationally significant resource projects, with further certainty and safeguards against militant and unlawful union tactics.

"Australia's resource employers support the Coalition's commitment to ensure future mergers between unions can only proceed where they are consistent with the public interest," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"This will not only correct a glaring omission from the existing legislation and bring unions into line with the rules for corporate mergers, it will also ensure wider community interests are taken into account.

"It doesn't matter if Australia has 20 unions or 2000 unions, as long as they all respect and abide by our workplace laws. Unions that honestly and lawfully represent their members and comply with our workplace laws should easily pass such a test if they seek to merge with other unions."

Although the Coalition's policy will apply to all registered organisations seeking to amalgamate, AMMA called for a new public interest test following industry and community concerns about a proposed merger between the CFMEU and the MUA.

Concerns related to how two unions with a history of unlawful conduct and ignoring court decisions were looking to further bolster their influence on supply chains and contractor sectors.

In late 2015, the CFMEU's record of breaking Australia's workplace laws was lambasted by a Federal Court Judge who asked "*has there ever been a worse recidivist in the history of the common law?*"

The MUA has similarly forged a reputation for being openly and proudly militant, with its West Australian secretary infamously telling the union's 2013 national conference that "*laws need to be broken, you're going to get locked up*".

"The resource industry is concerned that an amalgamation between the MUA and the CFMEU would potentially put at risk the stability of the supply chain supporting offshore and onshore resource projects," Mr Knott says.

"Any coordinated ramping up of the militant industrial tactics of the CFMEU and MUA could jeopardise the timely completion of projects and supply of commodities to overseas buyers, and threaten future investment decisions.

"AMMA is pleased our recommendation for a public interest test has been taken up by the Coalition.

"Coupled with the restoration of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and the extension of its coverage to offshore construction, also championed by AMMA, these measures will provide certainty to investors, industry and the broader Australian community that significant future resource sector projects will not be put at risk by union militancy or unlawfulness."

In AMMA's [2016 Election Survey](#) of over 100 resource employers, representing 85,000 employees, 86% believed union amalgamations should be scrutinised against a public interest test. 82% supported the 'urgent' restoration of the ABCC.

MEDIA CONTACT: Kylie Sully on 0409 781 580 or kylie.sully@amma.org.au.