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Suspending Awards and Enterprise Agreements will save business, jobs

SUSPENDING industrial awards and enterprise agreements for up to six months will save more businesses and jobs from being lost to the COVID-19 crisis, the resources and energy industry has told the Australian Government.

In [a letter](#) to Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations Christian Porter, Australian Resources and Energy Group AMMA said “daily tinkering of modern awards and enterprise agreements through technical and lengthy processes” does not offer the agile and urgent decision-making required by business during these unprecedented times.

“The ability for businesses to respond to the threat of COVID-19 in their workplaces is being significantly hampered by Australia’s industrial relations system,” Steve Knott AM, chief executive of AMMA, said.

“There is a tsunami of **significant commercial impacts** on its way in Australia’s resources and energy sector.

“As the crisis worsens the rigidity of the relevant awards and some enterprise agreements will create even further barriers to employer response strategies intended to keep operations viable and people in employment.”

In the correspondence Mr Knott noted the work being done by business, unions and the Fair Work Commission to vary a number of Awards. Citing the variation to the *Clerks – Private Sector Award* as a prime example, he said these processes have “been far too slow” and “serves little to no value to businesses seeking immediate relief”.

“In terms of an effective response to COVID-19 these outcomes fall well short of what’s needed to assist the broad majority of businesses. By the time any real options for change are made available to and understood by businesses, the impacts on employment will largely already be done,” he said.

“(Further) these award variations in isolation do nothing for the many employers and employees who are covered by terms and conditions of enterprise agreements.

“There is an option available to the Morrison Government that would deliver immediate and overwhelming relief from regulatory burden for all Australian employers and employees – **temporary suspension of the industrial awards system and enterprise agreements for three to six months.**”

“Such a course of action would result in Australian businesses managing one level of industrial regulation (instead of three) – minimum wages alongside the National Employment Standards - whilst seeking to make changes to employment arrangements and maintain their viability.

“This would deliver the significant capacity businesses require to enact real changes in their workplaces in response to COVID-19, ultimately seeing more Australians remain in their jobs, reduced reliance on the welfare system and swift economic recovery once this crisis is behind us.”

AMMA will continue to discuss this proposal with the government and other relevant stakeholders in coming days and weeks.

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