



# MEDIA RELEASE

## Australian Mines and Metals Association

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**7 November 2007**

### **Resources Sector Welcomes Coalition Workplace Relations Policy Announcement**

'The Coalition's workplace relations policy announced today is far superior to previously announced ALP workplace relations policy plans', Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) Chief Executive Mr Steve Knott said today

In particular AMMA welcomes the proposal to retain the full range of agreement making options for employers and employees and provide employers with protections against wild cat and illegal industrial action organised by union militants.

The decision of the Coalition not to buckle to the ACTU's misleading scare campaign and abolish Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) is welcome and will help ensure the Australian economy is better able to benefit from the strength of the resources sector.

Shadow Workplace Relations Minister Ms Julia Gillard referenced AMMA in her National Press Club debate with Joe Hockey today. Ms Gillard highlighted a report where AMMA stated miners would adapt to Labor's IR plans if there were no AWAs.

This needs to be viewed in context. If AWAs are abolished against the sector's wishes there is no choice but to adapt.

The article Ms Gillard referred to gave reference to the resources sector's preference to retain AWAs. Ms Gillard omitted this fact today. The article also went on to highlight that if AWAs went, the sector would look to agreement arrangements that could 'mirror the terms and conditions of AWAs and can deliver similar sorts of outcomes'.

'It should not be deduced from Ms Gillard's comments today that the resources sector endorses ALP plans to do away with AWAs, as nothing could be further from the truth' Mr Knott said today

A continuation of workplace reforms of the past 14 years is vital for the resources sector to fully capitalise on opportunities, something that should be maximised if Australia is to prosper economically. ALP plans to roll back such workplace reforms at the behest of the union movement presents a very real risk to employers generally.

ALP policies include abolishing AWAs and the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), providing unions a role in employee agreements and re-introducing union-dominated pattern bargaining under the guise of multi-employer bargaining. This position, combined with plans to allow unions to bargain on matters unrelated to the employment relationship and to strike on 'any matter', is of serious concern to business.

'These ALP policies have been condemned by all major employer groups throughout Australia as they will create investment uncertainty and will fuel non productivity-related wage movements that will increase inflationary pressures', Mr Knott said.



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AMMA welcomes the Coalition's specific announcements concerning illegal and unlawful conduct of certain unions and their officials.

The continued flouting of industrial law by some union officials in the construction industry presents unacceptable risks to major investment decisions.

'These investment decisions are massive and should be maximised', Mr Knott said.

In a report released yesterday, Access Economics identified a staggering \$357 billion worth of projects in the 'consideration pipeline' and \$178 billion in the 'definite' category.

"More than ever destructive anti-business behaviour of certain union officials needs to be jumped on", said Mr Knott

Under the current system union right of access to workplace permits are only removed in the most serious of cases after a long period of lawlessness.

'Today's Coalition policy announcements to prevent persons who act unlawfully from holding union office are welcome. Such an approach will progressively eliminate the job destroying maverick behaviour of rouge union officials', Mr Knott said.

The strengthening and increased funding of the Workplace Authority, the Employer Ombudsman and the ABCC is a further positive move.

AMMA also welcomes Coalition plans that increase flexibility in how annual leave may be taken without the need to lodge a formal workplace agreement. This will provide additional options for employees and employers, as will extended parental leave provisions.

These initiatives are in Australia's best interests and improve the quality of our industrial relations system. They ought to enjoy bipartisan support.

For further comment please contact:

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