



MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Mines and Metals Association

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ACTU wrong again, AMMA sets the record straight

In the fight to restore privileges to union bosses Greg Combet (ACTU Secretary - ALP Candidate) has today accused the resources industry of undermining worker collective bargaining and union membership rights. 'Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr Combet's comments are just plain wrong', Mr Steve Knott, Chief Executive of Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA), said today.

'The ACTU continue to hark back to ILO Conventions that pre-date Black and White TV in Australia. They were written after World War II with the intention of improving labour conditions and establishing peace'.

Convention 87 supports the right of workers to join or not to join unions. 'The right not to join a union has found favour in Australia with workers voting with their feet. In fact, union membership has been in decline for over 50 years – including every year since Australia ratified Convention 87 in 1973', Mr Knott said today.

Convention 98 deals with the right to organize and bargain collectively. 'It doesn't prohibit individual bargaining', Mr Knott said. This convention was created in 1949 and pre-dates formal non-union collective and individual agreement making in Australia by 40 years. Australia's laws allow unions to represent all workers who wish to negotiate agreements, collective or individual, but only where the worker wants the union to represent them.

The ACTU claim is simply another smokescreen designed to focus attention away from an ALP policy heavily biased toward unions with the intention of re-unionising Australia. 'Clearly union influences have resulted in the rights of individuals and non-union members being 'glossed over' in the ALP's IR policy', Mr Knott said

The following facts are more relevant to this debate:

- The Australian resources sector is booming with export receipts for the coming year estimated at more than \$114 billion.
- The Office of the Employment Advocate estimates the resources sector has 51,800 AWAs (37.2%) including the heavily unionised coal sector.
- An OEA review of mining agreements lodged in the past three months found that 80 per cent of the mining industry employees had entered into an AWA as their preferred form of agreement making.
- Private sector union membership has declined to 15%.
- The offering of jobs based on AWAs has not deterred 20,000 workers applying for 1000 jobs at Rio Tinto in the past 12 months.
- Only 8 per cent of Rio Tinto's workers, including coal sites, are on a union collective agreement.
- Despite howls from the union movement and its supporters, the AWA is clearly the industrial instrument of choice in the resources sector.

The freedom to join or not join a union is not at issue. Our present AWA laws allow unions being a bargaining agent if the worker so chooses.

'The mantra of the ACTU and others, of forcing employers and employees to bargain collectively is designed to deny individuals, who do not wish to be part of the collective bargaining process, to once again be subject to union control' Mr Knott said.

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