



## AUSTRALIAN MINES AND METALS ASSOCIATION

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### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **RESOURCE SECTOR WELCOMES FINAL APPROVAL OF WORKCHOICES**

*"Today's final approval of the WorkChoices legislative reforms by Parliament represents a significant structural step towards a simpler and more efficient workplace relations system in Australia", Mr Steve Knott Chief Executive of Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) said today.*

This follows nearly a decade of much needed reforms being stalled in the Senate.

*"Had the Government not used its control of both houses of Parliament to ditch the current multitude of outdated State and federal industrial relations systems in this country they would have been justly criticised," Mr Knott said.*

These reforms are long overdue for industries such as the resources sector, an industry that employs well in excess of 100,000 employees and currently contributes over \$80 billion per year in export earnings for Australia.

The need to improve international competitiveness remains critical to the long term sustainability of the Australian resources sector. By necessity, this sector has and will continue to embrace workplace flexibility. This has been a driving force behind the resources sector being at the forefront of workplace reforms in Australia.

The 1996 Workplace Relations Act supported systems that facilitated direct employment arrangements between employers and employees. This change has resulted in improved safety performance, enhanced remuneration for employees, significant productivity improvements, industrial action lost time being almost non-existent, expenditure on training employees being dramatically increased and so forth. As outlined in a recent Senate inquiry, the proliferation of individual employment contracts that followed in the resources sector has reflected the needs of the particular enterprises and individual employees. AMMA strongly believes this will be further enhanced by the WorkChoices legislation.

*“WorkChoices will simplify agreement making, reduce unwarranted third party interventions, create greater certainty in investment decisions for employers and in will facilitate ongoing improvements in employment terms and conditions for employees,”* Mr Knott said

Mr Knott stated that while WorkChoices represented an evolutionary step in the right direction for workplace relations in Australia *“it is not a panacea and further workplace reform will be required. This will include provisions to enhance the status of individual employment contracts so they are not subservient to a still comparatively regulated workplace relations system.”*

AMMA welcomes the amendment of WorkChoices to allow greenfields agreements with unions to operate for 5 years. This was one of many issues that AMMA actively lobbied for. *“This, along with improved compliance provisions, will provide much needed certainty for many multi billion dollar resources projects both planned and awaiting final investment approval,”* he said.

*“As with the Workplace Relations Act 1996, the hysterical doom and gloom claims about the WorkChoices legislation will, with the passing of time, be shown to be misguided and misplaced,”* he said

For Further Comment Contact

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