

ACTU campaign 'desperate attempt' to retain status quo

The ACTU's latest calls for changes to the Fair Work Act is a 'desperate attempt' to retain the excessive bargaining powers granted to unions under the current laws and divert attention away from positive industrial reform, AMMA chief executive Steve Knott said today.

Ahead of Fair Work Australia's scheduled review into the country's industrial framework, the ACTU this week ramped up its campaign to push the Federal Government to remove all remaining restrictions on workplace bargaining.

According to Mr Knott, the claims would open the floodgates for unions to take strike action over any matter and completely ignore the detrimental economic impacts of union powers and privileges under the current laws.

"Employers across Australia have to call the unions out on this campaign for what it really is, and that's a desperate attempt to offset the growing evidence for positive industrial reform and retain the status quo," Mr Knott said.

"If the ACTU was serious about protecting Australian jobs it would instruct its affiliate unions to negotiate genuine flexibilities in agreements that would assist workplaces to remain competitive and profitable.

"There is already an excessive scope for unions to bargain on a wide array of matters under the Act and through this campaign the ACTU is demonstrating a complete ignorance about how businesses and the economy actually operate."

Resource industry employer group AMMA has conducted several industry surveys that support independent evidence reinforcing that the existing IR laws have failed to deliver promised productivity benefits.

Employers are struggling to maintain any current flexibilities and, with their hands tied behind their backs, have no leverage to negotiate further productivity improvements in return for wage increases. They are also battling increased right of entry provisions, the ability to strike without majority support and clauses requiring employers to actively promote union membership.

"On top of that, employers are now being faced with the further threat of strike action being able to be taken over issues that have nothing whatsoever to do with wages and conditions, but everything to do with increasing union rights and privileges," Mr Knott said.

"If the ACTU had its way, Australia's IR system would degenerate into a free-for-all where unions could make claims on any issue and prosecute those claims through the taking of protected industrial action. Any thought of making the enterprise more competitive is simply not on the agenda.

"The wave of support for serious reforms to Australia's industrial relations framework is gathering serious momentum as the detrimental impacts of the current IR regime become far clearer. The ACTU is obviously pushing these preposterous claims in an ill-fated attempt to halt this much welcomed revelation."

Based on its '10 key areas of IR reform', AMMA will make vital recommendations in its submission to the upcoming review of the Fair Work Act, commencing from January 2012. Copies of this document, which outlines the major pitfalls in the Fair Work Act, are available upon request.

Tom Reid, Media & Communications Adviser
M: 0419 153 407 or E: Tom.Reid@amma.org.au

Minna Knight, Director of Member Services and Public Affairs
M: 0429 143 449 or E: Minna.Knight@amma.org.au