

MEDIA RELEASE

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2015 must be the year of workplace reform, says resource industry

The resource industry employer group - AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association)

FUNDAMENTAL reform to the national workplace relations system must start in 2015 if Australia is to meet its mounting economic, employment and social challenges, according to the peak body representing resource industry employers, AMMA.

As resource employers navigate falling commodity prices, tapering investment and damaging strikes and strike threats, AMMA executive director Scott Barklamb says Australia cannot afford its workplace relations system 'to become a millstone around the neck of our economy and community'.

"The warning signs are clear. Investors are increasingly viewing Australia as an expensive place to do business, are concerned at our capacity to deliver projects on time and budget, and are concerned about reduced productivity" Mr Barklamb says.

"The International Monetary Fund has warned if Australia doesn't significantly improve its labour productivity, we will fail to maintain growth in living standards over the coming decade.

"The World Economic Forum ranks Australia in the top echelon of countries on health, education, economic regulation and the rule of law, but among the bottom on cooperation in labour-employer relations, flexibility of wage determination, hiring and firing, and linking pay and productivity."

2015 will be a pivotal year. The recently announced Productivity Commission review into Australia's workplace laws should expose how the Fair Work Act is failing workplaces, employers, employees and the community, and identify options for a better system.

On behalf of the resource industry, AMMA is commissioning substantial research into the economic and employment impact of Australia's current approaches to:

- damaging strikes and threats to strike
- what can be included in an employment agreement, and in union logs of claims
- when and how unions can come onto worksites
- employment terms and conditions for new major resource projects
- new options for individual agreement making

AMMA will tell the Productivity Commission that if the resource industry is to continue to create employment opportunities and help sustain high living standards throughout the community, critical problems with the national workplace laws must be confronted.

"There is nothing fair in regulation that puts jobs at risk, threatens living standards, and reduces the capacity for young people to get a job" Mr Barklamb says.

"2015 is the year to have a long overdue national conversation on workplace reform, and to demonstrate the political and social maturity to deliver the best possible balance between protecting employment standards, and productive and competitive enterprises.

"Our political representatives must let the Productivity Commission do its work, then realistically consider its recommendations and any proposed legislation with an open mind.

"This should include reconsidering legislation already before the parliament. A positive start to 2015 would be the urgent passage of the workplace reform bills currently stalled in the Senate."

MEDIA: Contact AMMA media manager Tom Reid on 0419 153 407 or Tom.Reid@amma.org.au.