

Do not green light union militancy, say miners

Statement by Scott Barklamb, AMMA Executive Director - Industry

NATIONAL resource industry employer group AMMA is urging Parliament not to give a green light to union militancy, following last night's release of a Senate Committee report into the *Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013*.

AMMA firmly rejects the recommendations of the ALP Senators that all parts of the Bill should pass. The amendments remain rushed, ill-directed and set to increase militancy in Australian workplaces.

Union Access to Workplaces (Right of Entry)

The proposed changes to the rules under which unions can enter employer-owned and controlled workplaces (called right of entry in the legislation) would give a green light to even greater union militancy.

The amendments would take an already out-of-control problem under the existing workplace legislation and ramp it up to 11.

The resource industry's biggest concerns with the Bill include:

- Rather than addressing genuine concerns from users of our workplace laws, the government's changes to the Fair Work legislation would further impede productivity and competitiveness.
- Making employee lunch rooms the default location for union discussions. This provides greater scope for union officials on site to disrupt the 87% of private sector workers who choose not to join a union, and would rather eat their lunch in peace.
- Requiring employers to provide transport and accommodation for unions to visit remote sites. These are highly complex operations with strict safety protocols which we are concerned may be jeopardised by the proposed expanded rights for trade unions.

The Coalition Senators on the Committee have taken a more sensible approach, including:

- Opposing making the employer responsible for union travel expenses relating to right of entry.
- Opposing making lunch-rooms the default meeting location for union business on worksites.
- Requiring a Regulatory Impact Statement to properly assess the costs and benefits of the proposed amendments.
- Asking the government to instead prioritise changes identified by Fair Work Review to fix flaws in the fair work system.

Workplace Bullying

The resource industry also remains very concerned with other aspects of the Bill, including the proposed new jurisdiction on workplace bullying.

As AMMA told the Senate Committee, bullying is a very important issue, but piling on yet another jurisdiction to the Fair Work Commission is the wrong way to address it.

The proposed anti-bullying measures were not recommended by the government's own review panel. They threaten to sideline safety regulators who should be spearheading anti-bullying.

MEDIA RELEASE

A better approach would be an urgent dialogue with states/territory safety regulators.

While AMMA is disappointed the Opposition has not completely opposed the government's approach to bullying, we support their recommendation that employees should take all reasonable steps to resolve their concerns before the Fair Work Commission becomes involved.

A massive and telling omission from the proposed bullying measures is any action to combat bullying by union officials and union members. This is a clear point of contrast between the political parties.

AMMA congratulates the Coalition on recognising the seriousness of union bullying and militancy and proposing to do something about it.

GAME ON: Great Debate between Shorten and Abetz

This Senate Committee report on the latest proposed Fair Work changes, comes less than a week after the Coalition released its policy to improve Australia's workplace laws if elected in September.

The scene is set for a highly topical and potentially fiery debate between Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten and Opposition Spokesperson Senator Eric Abetz at the 2013 AMMA National Conference.

Taking place on Friday May 17 (1:30pm) at Melbourne's Crown Conference Centre – secure your place now.

CONTACT: Tom Reid, AMMA media adviser on 0419 153 407 or tom.reid@amma.org.au