

MEDIA RELEASE

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AMMA supports WA police operation targeting illicit drugs on mine sites

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

AMMA strongly supports the coordinated efforts of the Western Australian Police Force and resource industry employers in cracking down on any possible possession or use of illicit drugs in the state's remote mining sector.

The industry-wide initiative began today with major iron ore miner Fortescue Metals Group assisting WA Police in their drug detection activities for employees and contractors travelling to one of its remote Pilbara mine sites.

It is AMMA's understanding that Fortescue is the first of several resource sector employers in the state to be actively supporting the wider police operation.

"AMMA commends Fortescue Metals Group and CEO Nev Power for working closely with state police in their wide ranging anti-drug operation, consistent with the resource industry's zero tolerance approach to illicit drugs on its work sites," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"The nature of resource industry work, often involving heavy machinery, gas plants, shipping movements and hot molten metal, highlights why a zero tolerance approach is the only approach to effectively manage and minimise safety risks to employees associated with drugs.

"It is a testament to the seriousness in which the WA Police Force takes this matter that the state has dedicated considerable resources in remote areas to tackle this issue."

AMMA has long been a strong advocate for employers having the right to manage drug and alcohol risks in their workplaces, including determining the best approach to testing, be it urine or saliva-based.

"It has been concerning that some third parties quite removed from the workplace, such as union bosses and members of IR tribunals, have sought to water down stringent drug and alcohol management policies implemented by employers on remote worksites," Mr Knott says.

"This often includes those with little resource sector experience and from the comfort of air conditioned CBD offices, seeking to substitute their views on remote site drug management for those of experienced safety professionals.

"This could very well have serious consequences for somebody working in a remote mining environment, where anyone affected by drugs or alcohol not only puts their life at risk, but also the lives of their colleagues.

"Today's police operation reinforces employer concerns regarding the dangers of drug use on remote resource worksites, and should cause a re-think by those who have attempted to counteract the strict anti-drug requirements insisted on by the industry."

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