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More cooperation, less red tape for Australia's IR system

AUSTRALIAN resources and energy employers welcome the opportunity to present best practice case studies on workplace cooperation, productivity enhancements and employee engagement in response to a new industrial relations discussion paper released today by the Australian Government.

"AMMA welcomes the Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations, Christian Porter, exploring how industrial relations policy can better support workplace cooperation, productivity and positive workplace cultures," Steve Knott, CEO of Australian Resources and Energy Group AMMA, said.

"There are clearly many ways in which Australia's approach to industrial relations policy could better encourage cooperative, productive workplaces. As a starting point, regulatory burden should be eased in high-paying sectors where employees more often than not choose their employer.

"In the resources and energy sector, employees are becoming more highly skilled and less homogeneous in their work. Collective approaches are giving way to greater individual motivation and stronger direct engagement between employees and their employers.

"By contrast, Australia's industrial relations system has barely evolved since it was first designed in the early 1900's. It remains preoccupied with "us and them", "capital vs labour" principles, reflective of a bygone era where 1-in-2 employees were trade union members.

"In 2019, with less than 1-in-10 private sector employees choosing to join unions, we need a system that embraces the majority, not a declining minority. These future of work trends are a worldwide phenomenon, but Australia has been especially slow to react and evolve.

"It is way past time to develop a system that meets the needs of a modern workforce, a changing workforce and a workforce for the future."

AMMA has been a thought leader on this subject. Its publication [A New Horizon: Guiding Principles for the Future of Work](#) explores how technology, demographic trends and changing attitudes are fostering greater direct engagement between employers and employees.

The research showed:

- 97% of resources employers report changing demographics and employee attitudes;
- 92% of employers believe the future workforce will demand more flexibility in how they work;
- 86% of employers report changing industrial circumstances partially due to generational change;
- 85% of employers say technology is making the workforce far less homogenous.

"The workplace of the past was based on one-size-fits-all, long-term hierarchical employment relationships in which employees worked full-time, on-site, uninterrupted, and exclusively for one employer... The workplace of the future is lean, high-performing and incredibly flexible."¹

AMMA looks forward to building on the themes and research in its *New Horizon* report as part of its submission to the Attorney General's new workplace relations discussion paper.

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¹ Tulgan, B. (2017) *The Great Generational Shift – How Employees Are Changing* (AMMA New Horizon report, page 26).