

## *Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill 2019*

### **1. Introduction**

**1.1** This submission is made on behalf of members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union ('AMWU'). The AMWU, as known on a collective and public basis is made up of the Automotive, Metals, Engineering, Printing and Kindred Industries Industrial Union of Employee, Queensland (the State Registered Union) and the "Automotive, Food ,Metals, Engineering, Printing and Kindred Industries Union "known as the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) (The Federal Registered Union). The AMWU represents over 70,000 members working across major sectors of the Australian economy, including Metalliferous Mining, Quarrying and Coal Mining Industries.

The AMWU Queensland/NT branch represents over 14,000 members with the vast majority employed in Queensland.

**1.2** The AMWU, as a stakeholder in the industry welcomes the opportunity to make comments on the draft RSHQ Bill.

### **2. Summary**

**2.1**The AMWU supports the Palaszczuk Government Draft Resources Safety and Health Queensland Bill. The establishment of RSHQ as an independent statutory body to regulate safety and health in the resources sector is to be commended. For the first time, the approach will, in the Metalliferous Mining, Quarrying and Coal Mining sectors, see a consistent safety focussed approach applied. Such an approach will undoubtedly save lives and help to reduce the injury toll within the resources sector.

The Independent Statutory body will, for the first time, put in place a regulator focussed just on safety and health. In these resources sector injuries both physical and those which come from long exposure to conditions such as very dusty dirty environments, will benefit from such a focussed approach

**2.2** Giving the new body the role of monitoring compliance will help develop a safety-first culture within this potentially dangerous environment.

**2.3** The AMWU also supports the establishment of a Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health. It demonstrates that the recent deaths in the industry needed to be addressed. This office will undoubtedly be able to focus the efforts of staff that have previously been restricted to either metalliferous mining, quarrying or coal mining. Combining all areas of the resources sector under the control of one Safety Authority will provide workers with the confidence that their daily work may be in a dangerous environment, but their safety and health is of paramount importance to both them and the Government.

**2.4** Another major initiative that the AMWU strongly supports is that of the **safety reset**.

**2.5** However the AMWU believes that this safety reset concept should be the fore runner for a more focused regular approach. Whilst the **safety reset**, if undertaken in the way that Minister Lynham has put forward, will undoubtedly expose some issues at the mine sites which need urgent attention before there are serious or tragic accidents, the concept is not fully developed.

This concept, if taken a little further, would give the resources sector a powerful monitoring tool to identify and deal appropriately with issues on a regular basis before they lead to severe or tragic accidents or fatalities.

**2.6** What should occur as a mandatory requirement is that each mine site, quarry or resource sector site hold a whole of site or shift (if the mine /site works a shift roster) meeting of all employees and contractors on site every 6 months. The purpose of the meeting or consultation is for the whole site or shift to review the safety of the mine, quarry or other resource sector site from the perspective of the worker. The worker in this situation needs to understand that they will not be victimised or disciplined or adversely treated for raising what they believe is a legitimate safety issue. The Act needs to contain provisions which work to protect the worker who is raising the safety concerns.

A worker in such a situation is empowered to raise any safety issue they have about the operation without fear of victimisation or harassment post the meeting. The purpose behind such a meeting or consultation is to actively involve all employees in their safety and health. In this way employees or workers have a responsibility both morally, ethically and in the interests of all workers on site to raise any safety or health concerns they may have. They acknowledge that they have a very serious role in their own Safety and Health.

**2.7** Post the meeting each mine or quarry should be required to advise the office of the Commissioner for Safety and Health of all the issues raised by the workers and any solutions that have also been put forward. Such issues should also be required to be prominently displayed in the mine site, and only removed when a solution is implemented.

It is asking the mine owners to give up 2 days per year of production but if it leads to a reduction in safety and health issues at the mine site then in the long term those two days will be extremely valuable.

**2.8** As the process goes on from year to year it will need to be reviewed to see it is continuing to achieve what it was designed to do but the AMWU believes such a process would see more workers taking an active interest in their own safety and health. A safer healthier more productive workplace is the result.

**2.9** The anecdotal reports coming back from both coal and metalliferous mines across Queensland indicate that the process has not been implemented **consistently** across sites. In some cases it has been squeezed into a half day which gives the workforces concerned that the message of ensuring workers go home safely and in good health is important but nowhere near as important

