

PROTECTING OUR MEMBERS JOBS POLICY

The coal mining and power industries face short and long-term challenges that will affect the nature and number of current and future jobs.

Some of these challenges include:

- automation of mining technology.
- volatility in export markets.
- attacks on workers' and Delegates' rights.
- developments in renewable energy technology.
- domestic and international emissions reduction targets to address climate change.

As the Union representing workers in coal, power, rail, ports and metalliferous industries, we are committed to navigating these challenges in the best interests of our Members and their communities, recognising the important role our Union has historically played in advocating for the towns and regions that host our industries to get their fair share of the benefits.

Our policies attempt to address major areas of foreseen change in the period ahead. They are not exhaustive but are designed to guide our political, industrial and community activity to secure the best possible outcomes for Members.

Regardless of the challenge, our approach will be guided by these principles:

- We will fight for safe, secure, well-paid, organised jobs in the industries that the Union operates.
- We will work with relevant stakeholders to influence their positions and activities on matters affecting our Members.
- We will advocate for the industries that employ our Members.
- We will provide Members with factual and realistic information about issues affecting their jobs and industries.
- We will not tolerate our Members and their communities bearing an unfair cost for structural change in the economy.
- We will insist that our Members share in the benefits where change occurs.
- Where current or future job losses are unavoidable, we will fight for fair treatment, compensation and investment in affected communities.

Policy 1: Supporting our Industries

Our Union is committed to supporting coal, energy and other industries that employ our Members.

To this end, our Union will work with all relevant stakeholders including local, state and federal governments, the Australian Labor Party, the Minerals Council of Australia and its state counterparts, employers and other unions to promote the value of our industries in job creation and Australia's economic well-being.

We will work to inform and educate the public about the role and importance of our industries through all our communications channels.

We will form alliances with companies and industry groups as necessary to advocate for the support of coal and energy mines and projects that meet regulatory requirements, community standards and will create jobs for Members.

We will use our position and influence within the Labor Party – at a federal and state level - to advocate for policy positions that are supportive of jobs in our industries and strongly express our concern where support is not forthcoming.

We will take every opportunity to address state and federal parliamentarians of all stripes about the value of our industries, the jobs they create and the value they deliver to the economy.

Our advocacy will emphasise the importance of our thermal and metallurgical coal export industries, the important role of the domestic coal power industry, the outlook for different parts of the industry including future workforce impacts and measures needed to actively support jobs, skills and community benefit.

Policy 2: Automation

Automation is a challenge as employers seek to take more control by automating processes and machines, which has an effect on the number of workers and types of roles.

Advances in technology, are a constant in our industries. However, we believe that the benefits of technology should be shared with mineworkers and regional mining communities and not siphoned off for the exclusive benefit of companies, executives and shareholders.

The outcomes of automation for workers can vary enormously depending on whether the benefits are genuinely shared with the workforce. They can range from job cuts, skills decline and reduced pay and conditions; to better jobs with better pay and career development opportunities.

The mining industry is advancing its activities in automated technology. Automation of iron ore is well underway, some coal ports and Coal Handling & Preparation Plants (CHPP) are being remotely operated. Also, driverless trucks and autonomous drills in open cuts and remote operated longwalls and development equipment in undergrounds are being introduced.

The Union will use every opportunity to fight for fair outcomes for workers and communities when companies increase automation. This includes site level bargaining and targeted campaigns, legal intervention, negotiations with company head office nationally and globally, working with industry associations and other Australian and global unions and political advocacy to influence party policy and government regulation of the mining industry.

We note that '*social license to operate*' is a major concern for mining companies currently. The provision of skilled, local, well-paid jobs is central to mining companies' social license to operate and we will hold them to account for maintaining their social license to operate through the fair implementation of automation.

As automation and other technological change projects are introduced, we will negotiate with companies and campaign at the workplace level for:

- Genuine consultation with the Union about the future job design, training and redeployment required.
- Benefits flowing to work conditions including reduced working hours and/or better rosters.
- Bonuses on meeting automation/technological targets.
- No pay cuts due to automation or other technological change.
- Opportunities for our Members to access the new roles created through automation.
- New job roles created by automation and technological change activities are able to be covered by the Union's Constitutional Coverage rules.
- No forced redundancies or net job losses; but voluntary redundancies available where meaningful work is not available.
- Measures to monitor and prevent employers implementing "*manage out*" programs through over-use of disciplinary procedures or moving workers into substandard jobs.

In addition, we will advocate for automation and other technological change plans to be accompanied by a comprehensive training plan including:

- Development of a systematic training opportunities map for all stages of the automation process to enable mineworkers to transition to other jobs within the company and elsewhere.
- A program for the maintenance of competencies, beyond the rollout of automation.
- Comprehensive “*in employment*” quality training programs to assist mineworkers to seek out employment in other professions or careers (beyond the employer) which allows the employee to leave the business where they choose to do so.

We note that the mining industry is already heavily regulated for a range of important purposes including environmental protection, health and safety. We will advocate for protections against adverse impacts of automation to be included in government regulatory frameworks, including:

- Mining companies to be required to conduct economic impact studies to assess the effect on regional communities of any loss of jobs due to new automation and technological change projects.
- Mandatory community consultation and higher contributions to the community, through royalties or other investment programs, if loss of local jobs is forecast and/or eventuates.
- Work Health & Safety legislation to ensure that mine safety laws are able to have extra-territorial jurisdiction, even when interstate or overseas, to ensure higher standards are maintained if operations change jurisdictions.
- Jobs in Remote Operations Centres are to be located on-site or sourced locally in a nearby town, not in a capital city potentially thousands of kilometres away.

We will take all opportunities created by automation to grow our Union:

- Plan to “*follow the work*” wherever it goes.
- Seek to cover technical, professional and administration work.
- Fully organise Remote Operations Centres wherever they are located.

The Union will convene an automation and technological change working group to ensure experiences are shared between companies, worksites and Districts.

Policy 3: Climate change and energy transition

Energy and mining are emissions-intensive industries affected by government and company policies to address climate change.

We note that Australia's biggest trading partners including Japan and Korea, as well as state governments, and major players like BHP and Glencore have adopted targets of net zero emissions by 2050, while China has committed to net zero by 2060.

This means that these jurisdictions and companies are committed to making sure that the greenhouse gas emissions they produce (like carbon dioxide and methane) are reduced, or offset by abatement schemes, to lower these gases in the atmosphere.

Changes to the economy must be carefully managed to maintain Australia's prosperity while taking the necessary steps to reduce emissions in line with the international multilateral agreements supported by both major parties.

Coal, coal power and other fossil fuels like gas can and should still play an important role in Australia's economy in the decades ahead, even as net emissions are reduced.

Global efforts to reduce emissions to address climate change are expected to impact on Australia's coal and coal power industries in these ways:

- Export demand for thermal coal will decline over time, however Australian thermal coal exports may still increase in the medium term within an overall global decline in demand for thermal coal due to its high quality and reliability.
- Export demand for metallurgical coal is likely to remain stronger for longer as the technology is not yet in place to replace the role of coal in steel-making.
- Closure of existing Australian coal-fired power stations as they reach the end of their operating lives and commercial viability.

The Union believes that the interests of our Members and Australian working people are best served by:

- The major political parties taking a sensible, bipartisan approach to climate and energy policy, rather than exploiting the issue for political gain.
- Recognising that it is up to other countries to determine how they will meet their emissions-reduction commitments, thereby maintaining and supporting Australia's export thermal and metallurgical coal industries for as long as there is demand.
- Continued support for thermal and metallurgical coal mines that meet regulatory approval requirements, recognising that coal will still play a role in energy and steel production for decades to come.
- Support for new technology high efficiency low emissions power stations and those with Carbon Capture and Storage(CCS) capacity.
- The transformation and rebuilding of the Australian economy that uses the existing strength and potential of our regions in manufacturing, mining and energy production. With good industry policy and commitment to our regions we can have new/expanded

industries with good, secure jobs – in low emission food and textiles, hydrogen manufacture, steelmaking and more.

- Investment and support for industries and technologies that will allow Australia to benefit from its substantial coal reserves in a low-carbon economy, such as carbon capture and storage technology for heavy industry and commercial coal-to-hydrogen with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) production.
- Serious long-term planning and investment in workers and regional communities affected by inevitable workforce decline due to structural economic change, such as the closure of coal-fired power stations and associated mines.
- Ensuring renewable projects including solar, wind and battery storage are transparent and accountable regarding quality and number of jobs and environmental impact across their life cycle including land rehabilitation. We support public ownership of new energy infrastructure.
- Creation of a statutory Energy Jobs Authority which is well resourced & properly funded and with the power to implement job transfer schemes for workers in coal power stations and associated mines – allowing for voluntary redundancy and redeployment opportunities to be shared across sites with the goal of no forced redundancies. The Energy Jobs Authority should have the capacity to develop and implement economic development programs for those regions.
- If nuclear energy is developed in Australia, we would seek coverage of new roles.

We do not accept that workers and communities who have contributed so significantly to Australia's prosperity should bear the cost of reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the economy, including proposals to 'transition' into lower paid and less secure jobs. No worker or community should be left behind – we demand good secure jobs.

If in future, reduced global demand significantly impacts workers and regions supporting our export coal industry, the Energy Jobs Authority should be used as a model to support jobs and industry development in affected regions.

We note that the cost of genuinely achieving the principles detailed in the Paris Agreement and other international agreements, and as demonstrated by the concrete actions of many other nations in providing a fair and equitable transition for mining and energy workers including to support 'no forced redundancies' and wage guarantees for affected workers, would be a tiny fraction of the hundreds of billions of dollars needed to transform the energy grid over the next 20 years.

It would be a reasonable and fair price, to bring everyone along as our economy transforms.

Policy 4: Members' and Delegates' rights at work

The safety and wellbeing, security and quality of our Members' jobs is absolutely enhanced through having access to independent information, advice and representation by our Members, workplace Delegates and WHS Representatives.

We will always stand up for Members' rights to Union representation and Delegates' rights to conduct Union business in the workplace through: campaigning for fairer workplace laws, bargaining for comprehensive Enterprise Agreements including Union rights and standing up to companies who try and bully workers out of their rights.

No mining or energy worker should fear for their job because they are defending their rights at work.

Members should have the right to:

- Participate in lawful Union activities at work (this includes advancing the views, claims and interests of Unions in the workplace.
- attend union meetings on site.
- meet with Delegates to raise concerns.
- have access to training and safety records.
- representation by a Delegate or Official in all matters relating to employment.

Union Delegates and WHS Representatives are the elected representatives of workers in their workplace. Delegates and WHS Representatives positions, functions and protections are covered by legislation but should have the right to:

- reasonable paid time and facilities to perform their role.
- represent Members at meetings, forums and court hearings.
- communicate with all employees and give them the choice of joining the Union.
- bargain collectively on behalf of Members.
- reasonable paid time for Union training and education.
- be treated fairly without discrimination.

Policy 5: Fair use of Australia's minerals

Mining companies do not own the minerals on their leases. They belong to the Australian people and a lease is a right to extract those minerals in return for multiple obligations including paying royalties and taxes and providing good jobs.

Mining companies should be required to undertake development of mine leases within a reasonable time of approval. Lease-holders should not be allowed to lock up the resources of the Australian people indefinitely. *"Use it or lose it"* timeframes should be attached to all mine leases.

Similarly, mining companies should not place existing mines on indefinite care and maintenance. This is often used to avoid closure and rehabilitation costs, and has the effect of prioritising profits over jobs and fair returns to the community. Where companies take the view that an operation is insufficiently profitable over a specific time period, they should be required to sell the operation to another company or relinquish the lease to government for re-issue to another operator. All sales or relinquishment of operations should fully provide for accumulated closure and rehabilitation costs, and full workers' entitlements.

Mine closure and rehabilitation provides important transitional economic, social and environmental benefits, especially where mining in a region may be in decline. It is currently an unsatisfactory outcome for both workers and the environment that very few former mines have been fully rehabilitated, and the leases surrendered. Mining is meant to be a temporary land use, and should provide long term benefits to the host community and the nation that continue beyond the life of any individual mine.

Policy 6: Permanent jobs and labour hire

The substantial increase in the use of labour hire contractors, including alternate employment arrangements and shelf companies (e.g. BHP Op Services model) by mining companies has seen the widespread replacement of permanent, directly-employed mineworkers with lower-paid casual mineworkers with no job security.

This unfair practice exploits weak workplace laws to undermine collective bargaining and drive down pay and conditions across the mining industry.

Mining should deliver secure, well-paid jobs to workers, including those in the communities and regions that host mining operations.

Our Union will continue to campaign for an end to the '*permanent casual*' labour hire business model that mining companies have embraced.

We need stronger laws to stamp out this unfair practice, including:

- A definition of casual in the Fair Work Act in line with the Federal Court Skene and Rossato decisions – that is, "*intermittent and without firm advance commitment.*"
- '*Same job same pay*' laws that make it unlawful to pay labour hire contractors less than permanent mineworkers performing the same job on a mine site.

Casual or fixed-term contractors should only be used for specialty work or to manage genuine peaks and troughs in production, not to replace permanent workers. Contractors should attract a genuine premium for their work – that is, "*a loading on top of the site EA rate, not the Award minimum.*"