

NATIONAL POLICIES



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Overview: Protecting our Members' futures

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.
- employer attacks on workers' rights and conditions.
- 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 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 current and future 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.
- We will stand up for safe and respectful workplaces.

Policy 1: Supporting our Industries

Our Union is committed to supporting coal, energy, metalliferous mining, 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 inform and educate the public about the role and importance of our industries through all our communications channels.

We will advocate for the support of mining and other 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 growing international significance of our metalliferous mining industry, the important contribution and challenges 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: Supporting project approvals

Resource industry projects face unprecedented challenges in gaining approval, due to new and complex state and federal regulation and in some cases, organised opposition and court challenges. Coal and metalliferous mine developments and extensions face multiple layers of approval, while also facing greater public scrutiny and the technical and operational challenges involved in reducing carbon and methane emissions in their operations.

Around Australia, there is a pipeline of more than one hundred mining project applications made during the past five years and awaiting federal environmental approval, ranging from coal mine extensions to the construction of haul roads supporting iron ore mines, and various critical minerals projects.

The MEU is committed to actively supporting resource projects that employ our Members now, may employ our Members in future or otherwise create jobs and economic benefit in regional Australia.

To this end, we will actively engage in assisting the proponents of resource projects to overcome obstacles in their approval. This includes preparing supportive submissions where appropriate and co-ordinating support from members and communities to demonstrate the current and future social and economic benefits of proposed projects.

Policy 3: Automation and AI

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. Additionally, driverless trucks and autonomous drills in open cuts and remote operated longwalls and development equipment in undergrounds are being introduced. Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are occurring at a rapid pace and will have further impacts on mining and energy workplaces.

The Union will use every opportunity to fight for fair outcomes for workers and communities when companies increase or introduce new uses of automation and AI technologies. This includes site level bargaining and targeted campaigns, legal intervention, negotiations with company head offices 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.
- Appropriate health and safety management of automated operations and processes.
- 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.
- Any new jobs created by automation and technological change to remain located in the mine's local community.

- Where semi-autonomous mining techniques are introduced, control centres are kept on-site.
- 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.

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 adverse economic, investment or safety impacts.

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.

Policy 4: 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 has adopted a target of net zero emissions by 2050, with bipartisan support. This is consistent with net zero targets set by our biggest trading partners including Japan and Korea, as well as state governments, and major industry players like BHP and Glencore. 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. However, many coal-fired power stations are now submitting expected closure years to AEMO that are much earlier than the end of generators' technical operating lives.

The Safeguard Mechanism policy of the federal government places obligations on large industrial facilities, including coal mines, to reduce their Scope 1 (on-site) emissions. For coal mines, diesel fuel and fugitive methane emissions are the main sources of Scope 1 emissions.

We support mining companies investing in the decarbonisation of their mining operations through fuel efficiency and emissions reduction technologies, such as ventilation air methane abatement technologies, as we believe these actions are aligned with community expectations and will thereby support coal mines to operate for longer into the future. We urge governments to treat coal mines the same as other industrial facilities and mines when designing policies to reduce industrial and mining sector emissions.

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.

- An orderly domestic energy transition, with Governments deciding the pace of generator closures based on appropriate replacement capacity being available, instead of the market deciding the pace of closures based on maximising profits.
- 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.
- Supporting realistic proposals for new technology power stations and those with Carbon Capture and Storage(CCS) capacity.
- Transforming and rebuilding the Australian economy using 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 (CCS) technology for heavy industry and commercial hydrogen-from-coal with CCS production.
- Serious long-term planning and investment for 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.

Policy 5: The Net Zero Economy Authority

The establishment of the Net Zero Economy Authority by the federal government is a significant and long overdue development. The Authority will have a singular focus on the future prospects and wellbeing of coal and gas power workers and communities across the country. The legislation behind the Authority sets out an innovative approach to supporting workers at coal-fired power stations and associated mines, utilising our unique industrial relations institutions to place obligations on employers to support affected workers, and provides a framework to develop and implement pooled redeployment and worker transfer programs. It is an opportunity to emulate international best practice approaches to structural adjustment, but designed in a way that is suited to Australia's specific circumstances.

Our Union was a leading advocate for the establishment of the Authority, driven by a sense of urgency as our coal power members faced redundancy with little notice and sometimes paltry support from employers and past governments.

While some good initiatives have been implemented at the workplace, local, and state levels, there has been no overarching, co-ordinated national approach.

We have lobbied behind the scenes, advocated publicly, collaborated with colleagues across the union movement, and commissioned research to support the outcome that we have now achieved – an Authority enshrined in law.

Now our focus must turn towards ensuring the success of the Authority and its programs. The energy transition will occur over decades, and a 'set-and-forget' approach to policy will not secure the outcomes we need in the short- and long-term. The Union commits to working proactively with the Authority to secure practical outcomes for members and regions.

The Net Zero Economy Authority needs appropriate resourcing to allow it 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 Net Zero Economy Authority needs the capacity to develop, coordinate, and implement economic development programs for regions affected by coal power closures.

If, in future, reduced global demand significantly impacts workers and regions supporting our export coal industry, the remit of the Net Zero Economy Authority's programs should be expanded to support jobs and industry development in those affected regions.

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 note that the cost of genuinely achieving the social principles detailed in the Paris Agreement and other international agreements, as demonstrated by the concrete actions of many other nations in providing a fair and equitable transition for mining and energy 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 6: Nuclear energy

As coal-fired power generation declines, governments of all levels need to invest in Australia's energy security for the future. Australia's energy transition is best served by policy that is transparent, evidence-based and economically viable.

There are a range of well-documented obstacles to the development of a nuclear energy industry in Australia. These include legislated national and state bans, the high cost of nuclear compared with other forms of energy and the realistic timeline required to build multiple nuclear power stations being far longer than the announced closure dates for coal-fired power stations. The lack of interest from investors in developing nuclear energy is a sign that nuclear is not an economically viable or preferred option.

If nuclear energy were developed, we would seek secure, well-paid jobs, opportunities for displaced coal workers and coverage of new roles.

However for the above reasons we believe that nuclear energy is unlikely to be developed in Australia, regardless of political claims. We do not believe nuclear power offers a realistic pathway into on-going jobs for our current members in coal-fired power stations. Coal-power workers need job pathways far sooner than the timetable for development of nuclear power which extends into the 2040s and beyond.

We call on all sides of politics to end the 'energy wars' which treat energy policy as an opportunity to score political points; and to get on with the job of securing Australia's energy future and supporting workers and communities affected by transition.

Policy 7: 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 which include Union rights and standing up to companies who try to 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, whose positions, functions and protections are covered by legislation. Despite these protections, Union Delegates are sometimes subjected to victimisation and discrimination in the workplace by employers, which we condemn.

We welcome new laws introduced by the Albanese Government to enhance and restore Delegates' rights and protections eroded over many years, including rights 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.

We will work to ensure that these new rights and protections are accessed by our Delegates to enable them to effectively represent Members.

Policy 8: Fair use of Australia's minerals

Mining companies do not own the coal, metalliferous, or rare earth 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, or sterilise the site. 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.

Policy 9: Post-mining land use

Mine rehabilitation can provide 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.

Mines are supported by local supply chains and industrial infrastructure including roads, power, buildings, and water supply which are well-placed to continue supporting and servicing local industry into the future, after the conclusion of mining. The rehabilitation process, as well as the development of new industries utilising useful mine facilities, can provide an important source of continued employment for workers and local communities. Mine workers at closing mines should be prioritised for employment opportunities created through the rehabilitation process.

Any strategy for post-mining land use must involve extensive community consultation, prioritise employment opportunities and economic diversification for regional mining communities, and facilitate the return of disturbed land to the community in a state which is safe, healthy, and usable. Robust rehabilitation compliance measures are critical for ensuring that communities aren't left with rehabilitation liabilities that should belong to mining companies. Provisions made, or security bonds held, for rehabilitation must cover the full cost of rehabilitation, including residual risks.

Policy 10: Permanent jobs and labour hire

The substantial increase in the use of labour hire contractors, including alternate employment arrangements and 'in-house labour hire' (e.g. BHP Operations 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.

We welcome the Albanese Government's 'Same Job Same Pay' laws to prevent mine operators using labour hire to undercut site Enterprise Agreements; and measures to stamp up the use of 'permanent casual' employment arrangements including a new definition of 'casual' and stronger permanent conversion rights.

Our Union will be ambitious in making 'Same Job Same Pay' applications for labour hire workers performing the same work on a mine site as permanent mineworkers, through the Fair Work Commission process.

Our Union will continue to campaign for an end to the proliferation of insecure employment models in the mining industry.

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. Genuine contractors should attract a genuine premium for their work, to reflect specialist skills and short-term nature of their engagement.

Traineeships should not be used by companies as a strategy for undermining permanent jobs and 'Same Job Same Pay' opportunities for workers.

All workers on site should be afforded the same rights and the same standard of safety, regardless of the way they are employed. Our Union recognises with concern that job insecurity is a major factor which discourages workers from raising safety complaints or refusing to work in unsafe environments.

Policy 11: Supporting international mining and energy workers

Our Union has a long and proud history of solidarity with international workers in mining and energy industries. We reaffirm our affiliation to IndustriALL Global Union and our strong commitment to supporting international mining and energy unions with fewer resources through financial support and capacity-building.

In many countries, mining industry health and safety standards are very poor, and injuries and fatalities occur at significantly higher rates than at mines in developed countries. We are committed to supporting international unions to organise for improved safety standards, including the establishment of best practice through sharing information and the expertise of our officials and ISHRs.

Policy 12: Safe and accessible workplaces for women

Our Union is enriched by the contributions of women as members, activists, delegates, lodge officials, safety representatives, and officers. We support mining and energy industries where female workers can enjoy good pay and secure working conditions and build fulfilling careers on an equal footing with their male workmates.

We advocate for fair and equal workplaces. Mining and energy industry employers need to better accommodate the caring responsibilities of both male and female workers. We commit to bargaining for rosters and conditions that provide flexibility to carers while maintaining the secure, permanent character of mining and energy work. This includes strong parental leave entitlements for primary and secondary carers.

We recognise that, in many areas, the mining industry falls short in providing a safe working environment for women. Shocking details of sexual harassment and assault have been brought to light by parliamentary inquiries, government reports, internal reviews of mining company culture, and our own Union member surveys.

The mining industry has a poor record of responding to and preventing harassment. Company culture discourages victims of harassment and assault from seeking support or lodging complaints with supervisors and managers. We believe that a strong Union presence is critical to improving poor company culture and providing alternative avenues of support for affected workers.

We are committed to equipping our delegates, organisers, and officials with training and tools to understand and address issues relating to workplace sexual harassment.

We welcome new laws introduced by the Albanese Labor Government which support women in our workplaces. These include paid domestic violence leave entitlements in the National Employment Standards, enforceable rights to request flexible working arrangements, a new positive duty for employers to prevent sexual harassment, the extension of the Government's paid parental leave scheme to 26 weeks, and the commitment to pay superannuation on paid parental leave from July 2025.

Policy 13: Support for mining and energy regions

Mining communities face unique challenges. They accommodate transient workforces, boom and bust commodity cycles, heavy vehicle use of public roads, and high demand on public infrastructure, and often face serious housing shortages.

Mining communities must see tangible benefits from their contributions to Australia's energy security and economy. A fair share of mining royalties should be reinvested into mining regions, to support the health and wellbeing of local residents. Mining companies should also be expected to invest their profits back into the communities that service their operations.

Mine workers should be able to live and raise families in local communities, and mining companies should invest in housing and facilities to support the choice of workers to live locally. Where there is a local community, mining companies are encouraged to reduce their reliance on FIFO and DIDO workforces and support local employment.

The global and domestic energy transition will profoundly impact Australia's coal regions. We are committed to supporting our communities through this challenging period, and will seek to lobby governments, investors, and companies at every opportunity to ensure the regions that have powered Australia for generations are not left behind. Though the transition will affect different parts of our industries on different timelines, all parts of our Union will always support the needs and interests of members and Districts facing the most immediate upheaval.

The development of new critical minerals mining industries must occur alongside investment in neighbouring community infrastructure and social services, and benefits must be shared.

Our Union has a storied history of supporting the social and sporting lives of coal communities and mining regions. We will continue to provide generous support to community organisations across Australia's mining and energy regions.

Policy 14: Lifting and enforcing safety standards for all

Safety is union business. The safety of our members at work is our top priority. Many of our members work in high risk environments, but injuries and fatalities are not, and should never be perceived as, inevitable.

We will strive to inform members about their safety rights in the workplace; and to empower them to advocate for safe work practices including by refusing to work in unsafe environments.

At the state level, we will advocate for comprehensive health and safety legislation and effective enforcement of standards by regulators.

Nationally, we will strive to identify best practice policy on safety issues and work together to lift standards across jurisdictions. We will document standards and provide guidance, support and capacity-building to Districts regarding evidence-based 'best practice', to ensure smaller or less-resourced Districts do not fall behind.

We recognise the important role of our union-elected Site Safety and Health Representatives and Industry Safety and Health Representatives. We will always defend their role in our industries and we will strive to extend the model of worker-elected, statutory safety representatives beyond the coal industry into other areas of the mining industry.

We will monitor and respond to emerging issues impacting the health and safety of our members, such as respiratory health and psychosocial hazards.

While we stand up in the workplace to mitigate against immediate risks, we are also committed to the lifelong health and safety of our members. We will advocate for the highest standards of medical screening and assessment for work-related health impacts. We don't accept that any worker should accept a shortened life expectancy due to the nature of their work.

We recognise the risks involved when operations are heading towards closure and maintenance may be underfunded, threatening worker safety. We will fight for safety standards to be prioritised during site closures or transitions.

We will strive to improve safety protections and outcomes for workers in insecure forms of employment such as labour hire and contractors.

Workers are safest when they are educated, organised and confident about speaking up for the safety of themselves and their workmates; we will always seek to empower and activate our members to put safety first.

Policy 15: Collaborating to achieve change

Our Union recognises the importance of working collaboratively and forming alliances across the union movement in order to achieve objectives for our members and their communities, and to show our support for workers in other industries. Our affiliation with the Australian Council of Trade Unions and state and regional labour councils provide an ongoing benefit to our Union through collaboration, resource and information-sharing, and coordinated action.

The Western Mine Workers Alliance and NSW Mine Workers Alliance with the AWU enable us to work together to build union presence across the iron ore mining industry in the Pilbara and hard rock mining industry in western NSW. We will seek to build alliances with other unions wherever appropriate to ensure that Australia's future mining industry is unionised, especially as demand for our country's critical minerals resources ramps up.

Mining and energy industries are dominated by powerful multinational companies, and pushing back against them requires international union coordination. Our affiliation to IndustriALL Global Union connects our members to the international mining and energy workforce, provides us avenues to organise across multinational operations and supply chains, and underscores our commitment to global solidarity.

We will continue to collaborate with industry super funds and like-minded investor groups to exert pressure on the publicly-listed companies that employ our members through shareholder influence. We will seek out and collaborate with allies to lobby for public and private investment in project proposals that would employ our members, and support those projects to proceed through regulatory approval processes in a timely fashion.

Many of the issues facing our members are inherently political, including unfair industrial relations practices and the impacts of climate and energy policy. Political engagement is an essential element of fighting for our members' interests and influencing public policy. Our ongoing affiliation to the Australian Labor Party gives us a voice at the highest level politically, and helped to deliver important results like Same Job Same Pay laws.

We are a regionally-based union with strong links to local communities. We will continue to work together with and provide our support to like-minded community organisations.

Policy 16: Superannuation and dignified retirement

Retirement is core union business and superannuation is a fundamental retirement right. Unions created industry superannuation funds to ensure that working people get the profits of their savings and have representation in the decisions about their savings. These funds are governed to embody these values and serve working people and are the best governed and best performing funds in Australia. In contrast, banks and corporations pay profits to shareholders, reducing the returns for members.

Fundamentally, superannuation is a workplace entitlement. This means that workers and their unions must be able to decide collectively which funds are best for their workplaces and industries and ensure that workers have industry appropriate funds including industry appropriate insurance.

The superannuation system must be overseen by the highest standards of governance and ethical practice. Workers' must have representation on their industry superannuation funds' boards through an equal representation governance model.

We acknowledge the long-standing relationship of our Union with Mine Super and the special role played by Mine Super to service workers in the coal industry. We will continue to recognise Mine Super as the best industry fund for coal mining and energy workers and to ensure our participation in governance of the fund benefits members and maximises returns and protections.

Fund trustees need to ensure that all decisions are made to benefit members and maximise returns through assurance of the highest standards of due diligence, particularly in the area of workers' rights and conditions. Fund investment decisions must support strong labour standards and protection of workers from anti-union behaviour.

Policy 17: Skills and training

Mining and energy workers must be provided with fair and reasonable opportunities to undertake training and skills development to support their ability to perform their jobs well and advance their careers.

Training opportunities must be offered to workers in a fair and transparent manner with no discrimination by companies in terms who is given the opportunities to undertake training.

Employers must provide support for workers to undertake training and gain new skills, including paying for course costs, paid time off work or flexible work arrangements to attend and participate in training.

Big mining and power companies have an obligation to skill up the next generation of young workers in the regions and towns where they are located. They should take on and employ an appropriate number local apprentices each year and these apprentices should be employed by the mining / power company, and not provided by a third party arrangement

Traineeships should not be abused and used as a mechanism to avoid paying fair wages and conditions. Traineeships should in general be limited to a maximum of 12 months, and the employer should be legally prohibited from 'churning' through trainees every 12 months to avoid paying fair wages and conditions.

Workers displaced by energy transition must be supported by employer-funded training packages to assist them to move into alternative, well-paid and secure employment.

Policy 18: Coal Long Service Leave

The Coal Industry Long Service Leave scheme was born out of the bitter seven-week coal strike of 1949. It was the first such scheme in Australia for blue collar workers and remains one of the most comprehensive in the world. Since then, our Union has won significant improvements, including reduction of the qualifying period for thirteen weeks from ten to eight years, recognition of breaks in continuity of service, inclusion of contractors and labour hire workers in the scheme, and recent 2023 amendments which ensure casual coal miners benefit fairly from the scheme.

Some coal mine workers continue to face difficulty accessing their entitlements, with employers who refuse to participate in the scheme or previous coal industry service wrongly going unrecognised. We will continue to advocate for improvements to the scheme to maintain its integrity and ensure it is fit-for-purpose for the current nature and patterns of employment in the industry, and for strong and effective compliance and enforcement measures.

We will continue to work for improved avenues to address employer non-compliance with their legal obligations, recognition of employees' complete service history, removal of anomalies that see some subsets of workers miss out on access to the scheme and fair accrual of entitlements during workers compensation or unpaid parental leave.

Policy 19: Supporting retired Members

Our retired members fought and won many of the conditions mining and energy workers enjoy today. Many of our retired members worked in extremely difficult circumstances, participated in epic industrial battles and were touched by the tragedies that have sadly punctuated the history of our industries.

The Retired Miners' Associations active in our Districts play an important role in keeping our retired members active and socially connected while also providing an avenue for advocacy around issues affecting them and campaigning for the objectives of the Union.

We note that the health impacts of a career in mining can emerge years after the leaving the industry and we will advocate for health programs to support retired members such as regular medical checks and respiratory screening where appropriate.

We commit to maintaining a life-long connection with our members, providing resources to support active networks of retired members, continuing programs such as our District-based funeral funds to support families and recognising members' long commitment to the Union through life memberships and other Awards.

Policy 20: History of coal mining and communities

Coal mining, coal communities, and our Union have played an instrumental role in our nation's political, social, industrial, and economic history over more than 150 years. This has been documented across numerous publications, documentaries, exhibitions, and oral history projects. We are committed to preserving our history, ensuring that future generations can learn from the battles and achievements of the past and that workers' voices are front and centre in the telling of these stories.

Our industries are undergoing profound changes and it is important that the industrial heritage of coal mining and coal power generation is celebrated and recognised appropriately. There is a strong case to preserve some historic coal mining and power station infrastructure after closure for the benefit and education of the community.

Our coal mining communities have borne an undue burden of tragedy over the years, with loss of life including major disasters due to the dangerous nature of coal mining. We will ensure that mining memorials continue to hold their rightful place in the heart of mining communities and that the sacrifice of those mining and energy workers killed at work is never forgotten.

Policy 21: Raising standards through the Award system and bargaining

We are committed to continuously raising employment standards for mining and energy workers through enterprise bargaining and through advocating for improvements to the Awards covering our members.

We welcome the significant improvements to the industrial legislation through successive rounds of legislative change introduced by the Albanese Labor Government.

These changes have improved the bargaining laws and made them fairer for example through removing the ability for employers to unilaterally terminate enterprise agreements and send them back to Award conditions.

Further reform is needed to improve the Award system and the laws around bargaining to deliver better wages and conditions for our members. Areas for reform include removing the unnecessary, cumbersome and anti-union laws that are designed to make it as difficult as possible for workers to take protected industrial action, to improve the bargaining rules to make sure that employers bargain fairly and in good faith, and further reform to ensure that employers don't seek to avoid their EA obligations by engaging labour hire or contracting our jobs.

The bargaining laws should also recognise the historic and continuing role that registered organisations have played in improving wages and conditions. Unlike self-represented bargaining representatives or 'red unions', Registered Organisations operate under strict regulatory and governance obligations. The bargaining laws should recognise these factors and dismantle the Howard era laws which unfairly place a registered organisation on the same platform as a self-represented bargaining representative or a 'red-union' during bargaining.

Our Union will continue to improve the wages and conditions of our members through both the award process and in bargaining. We will look to measures to ensure that our members are paid fairly for the work they do, and also look to bargain and win measures that assist our members in ensuring they enjoy time away from work and can meet their family, personal and community commitments.