

# Common Cause.

December 2025

## FAREWELL TONY MAHER

Dear Members,

As I prepare to finish my term as General President at the end of this year, I have found myself reflecting on what an extraordinary privilege it has been to lead this union for almost three decades. It has truly been the honour of my life.

When Central Council took a chance on a 37-year-old who joined the union through amalgamation, I could not have imagined the scale of the challenges ahead - nor the strength and unity our members would show in meeting them. From 1998 onward, in the face of industrial law changes designed to strip workers of rights and weaken unions, our members stood firm. Through long struggles, strikes, and lockouts, you faced down some of the world's most powerful corporations and governments determined to take us backwards. Time and again, it was your courage and solidarity that made the difference.

I am proud that our union didn't just respond to change - we shaped it. With the support of members, we built campaigning capability that enabled us to influence public opinion and impact politics. Central Council backed new approaches like the Unite Organising team and our AWU Alliances, which grew our strength and diversity. You drove that work and amplified it far beyond what could have been imagined at the start.



As I step aside, I do so knowing the major unfinished tasks have been completed, none more important than securing the MEU's future as a strong, independent union. I leave confident in the leadership that will carry the union forward - the most skilled, experienced, and deserving team the MEU has ever had. With the talented Stephen Smyth and a new General President in Grahame Kelly, the union is in the best possible hands.

Thank you for the trust, solidarity and strength you have brought to this union.

Yours in solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Maher'.

**Tony Maher**  
General President  
Mining and Energy Union

# STAYING SAFE IN THE 'SILLY SEASON'

As we reach the end of the year, a time that some call the silly season, I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on workplace safety and remind everyone in mining that workplace fatalities and injuries are preventable – but it takes all of us.

Unfortunately, 2025 was a sober reminder of the ever-present dangers in our industry. In October we lost Ambrose McMullen and Holly Clarke in an explosion at the Endeavor Underground Silver Zinc Mine in Cobar. Heading into the holidays, the thoughts are with their families, friends and colleagues.

Safety is in the DNA of the Mining and Energy Union. We remember the tragedies of the past and commit ourselves every day to ensuring they don't happen again.

This year we've taken an important step forward in our safety work with the launch of the MEU Safety Hub - your new home for everything to do with staying safe and healthy in the industry.

The Safety Hub pulls together what our union has been fighting for over decades: practical information, clear rights, and real stories about hazards that kill and injure mine and energy workers. It focuses on some of the big risks our delegates and checkies keep raising - fatigue, vehicle interactions, psychosocial risks, respiratory disease, alcohol and other drugs, and noise and hearing. And there's more to come.

Each of these hazards can change or end a life in an instant, or slowly over years underground or on the plant. Whether it's mine dust lung disease, a near miss with a haul truck, bullying or sexual harassment on site, or the slow creep of fatigue after too many long shifts, none of it is "part of the job" and none of it is inevitable.

What makes the difference is workers being organised and backed by a strong union. The Safety Hub is there to support that, with resources, podcasts, safety legislation and MEU policy you can use in safety meetings, investigations and negotiations with management.



As we head into the end of the year, many of you will be working through holidays, long hot shifts and time away from family. Please remain mindful of your psychosocial safety while at work, particularly if you are working over Christmas. In our industry distraction can be deadly, so try to remain focused while you're on the job or speak out if it's getting too much.

Likewise, fatigue multiplies your chances of being involved in an accident, both on-site and driving to and from work. While I encourage you to enjoy the Christmas season to the fullest, please ensure you are rested and refreshed before you return to work, particularly if you drive in, or operate heavy machinery.

Finally, please use the Safety Hub, talk to your delegate or safety rep if something doesn't look right, and keep looking out for your mates. If you see a hazard - speak up. If you're not sure of your rights – check the Hub or call the union.

In 2026 we'll keep building on this work, pushing employers and regulators to lift their game, and making sure every worker goes home safe and well. That's the standard we demand, and together, we can make it reality.

From the MEU to you and your loved ones, please have a joyous, refreshing, and most importantly safe Christmas season.

**Stephen Smyth**  
General Vice President  
Mining and Energy Union



# YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK: FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

As part of the suite of law reforms introduced by the Albanese Government, all workers covered by the national system in Australia - whether full-time, part-time or casual - gained a new right that could make a life-changing difference.

Under the amended Fair Work Act 2009 (following the Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave Act 2022), employees now have access to 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave every 12-month period.



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## HUGE WIN FOR WORKPLACE DELEGATE'S RIGHTS

The Mining and Energy Union has won a Federal Court decision confirming that Closing Loopholes reforms give workplace delegates the right to represent workers on site, regardless of labour hire or employment arrangements.

The ruling follows a legal challenge initiated by the MEU after the Fair Work Commission narrowed delegates' rights in modern awards in a way that cut across Parliament's intent. While the decision still needs to be implemented, it is a significant step toward restoring real, enforceable rights for workplace delegates in modern workplaces.



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# QUEENSLAND DISTRICT CELEBRATES DELEGATE LEGENDS

Last month, Mining and Energy Union Queensland District came together to celebrate the best of what makes the MEU strong - dedication, solidarity, and long-term commitment.

The Annual Queensland District awards night honoured the hard work of our site delegates and lodge officials, the frontline of support and advocacy in the workplace, while also recognizing the tenacity and promise of our emerging Union activists.

We also celebrated the long-term members of our Union, who have embodied Union values for the entirety of their working lives. Their presence, experience and advice continue to make a real difference across our sites every day.

The accolade for Best Delegate was awarded to Merv Wiki, President of the Moranbah North Lodge, who has helped build a strong and united Lodge under very difficult circumstances. Merv's care and support of his workmates in the wake of the Moranbah North underground explosion this year has been exemplary, as has his excellent communication through bargaining and major workforce changes.

Merv is retiring this year, moving on to the next phase of his life. His example and his mentorship of the next generation of MEU activists will leave a proud legacy to take the Union forward.

## OFFICE CLOSURES



The Mining and Energy Union National and District offices will be closing over the Christmas/New Year period. Follow the QR code for more details.

The award for Best Up-and-Coming Member went to Sarah Ogilvie, also from Moranbah North Lodge. Sarah is an electrician who lives union values both in and out of the pit. She's built a reputation for fearlessness, whether it's standing up for her workmate's safety, or in her love of skydiving and base jumping.

Sarah is also the founder of Power4Change, a registered charity that fights energy poverty by delivering electricity access to remote communities in developing countries like the Philippines.

Finally, we also acknowledged the long-term members of our Union, who have proudly stood with the MEU for the entirety of their working lives. Clinton Faine and Kerry Neilson both received awards for 40 years of membership, while Bruce Moulds was recognised for a staggering 50 years as an MEU member. Their commitment to the MEU stands as an example to us all.

We congratulate all of our MEU members who were recognized this year, and look forward to an excellent 2026.



# 2025 – A YEAR OF SUCCESS

As the year draws to a close, it's high time to reflect on the year that was for the Mining and Energy Union. 2025 has been a year of action for the MEU - growing our membership, improving our capacity, and winning stronger pay and conditions for thousands of mineworkers around Australia.

We have delivered Same Job Same Pay at 26 mines across New South Wales and Queensland, winning a cumulative \$150 million a year in well-deserved pay rises and breaking the back of the labour hire tort. Thanks to the MEU's advocacy, thousands of labour hire mineworkers are now receiving pay in line with their directly employed workmates – as they should have been from the start.

This has not been without its challenges, however through unity and determination the MEU has overcome them. BHP dedicated millions of dollars to fighting our applications covering Operations Services workers and attempting to subvert or delay the flow of pay rises.

Thankfully, through the testimony of our members and delegates and the work of our legal team, the courts saw through BHP's arguments and declined to delay the orders coming in to effect, with long overdue pay rises kicking in on 14 September. While the company has flagged further appeals, this is a monumental achievement and the cornerstone of our Same Job Same Pay campaign – one only possible due to the long-term vision, commitment and resolve of our members.

Likewise, we led the way on utilising and defending the new delegates rights laws, which allow workplace delegates to more effectively represent and advocate for their workmates. Late this month, we won a vital judicial review of these rights, establishing that delegates are able to represent all workers in a workplace - not just those employed by the same entity.

Same Job Same Pay and delegates rights were also in the crosshairs on the political front, along with the other workplace reforms introduced by the Albanese Government, in the Federal Election of May this year. A Peter Dutton Government promised to take us back to the worst days of the Coalition, rolling back our wins, gutting our public sector and doing next to nothing to address the cost-of-living crisis.

At the beginning of the year, the Coalition returning to power looked eerily possible – at some points even likely. However, the union movement stepped up and helped deliver a resounding result for Labor, returning them to power with an increased majority – the strongest result since WWII. The MEU and our members played no small role in this, giving our time and platform to defend the accomplishments of the last three years, and ultimately returning strong swings towards Labor in our target electorates.

2025 has been a year of action, of solidarity, and of standing up for what's right. Across the country, our lodges have taken action to improve the pay and conditions for themselves, their workmates, and their loved ones.

MEU members at Helensburgh, Rix's Creek and Ulan have taken industrial action following breakdowns of in bargaining, at great personal cost. Members have picketed, marched, and been locked out of their workplaces in pursuit of their claims.

I'm pleased to say that throughout the year, MEU members have stood strong, in solidarity with one another, to achieve better deals. The resolve of our lodges at Helensburgh and Rix's Creek saw improved agreements beyond what the company was previously willing to consider, while workers at Ulan stood firm long enough to trigger arbitration through the new Intractable Bargaining clause in the Fair Work Act. I congratulate these lodges on their success and solidarity and commend all MEU members who stood up this year for a better agreement.



# 2025 – A YEAR OF SUCCESS - CONT.

This year, however, has also seen significant ruptures in the industry at the expense of mine workers. Corporate and financial mismanagement has led to the suspension of operations at Liberty Bell Bay in Tasmania and Tahmoor mine, a highly profitable and effective operation, with workers furloughed indefinitely. The situation at LBB and Tahmoor is intertwined with the crisis at Whyalla Steelworks in South Australia, and the collapse of the Sanjeev Gupta business empire, and remains in the hand of liquidators.

We have spent this year advocating on behalf of the workers at Liberty Bell Bay and Tahmoor and continue to encourage the receivers to move quickly to sell the assets. Our thoughts are with the workers at Tahmoor and Liberty Bell Bay and their families, and hope the Christmas season brings some certainty.

Progress has been made in the energy sector this year, as the Net Zero Economy Authority ramps up their work in the community. We have long advocated for an agency to manage redeployment of workers at closing power stations into other roles, either within the industry or into other comparable, well-paid local jobs. While the Authority is not perfect, we have been engaging proactively and constructively to support their work as our power assets reach end of life.



In August, MEU delegates from power stations and captured coal mines across Australia met in Sydney to meet and discuss their individual circumstances and concerns, and plan for the future. This meeting was addressed by Industry Minister Tim Ayres and senior management of the NZEA, fostering dialog between energy workers and decision-makers. Delegates endorsed future plans and committed to further advocacy for their workmates and their regions.



Finally, I must conclude by acknowledging that the MEU's General President, Tony Maher, is retiring after 27 years at the helm. Tony has led the MEU through some of the most difficult times the union movement has faced in this country, always rising to the occasion with principle, integrity and determination. He has been an advocate, champion and mentor for thousands of coal workers - myself included.

Tony will remain on the Board of the NZEA and as the chair of Safe Work Australia, the Federal body setting work health and safety standards for the country. We wish him all the best for his well-deserved retirement.

To you and your loved ones, we wish you a happy and safe Christmas and New Year, and are excited to return in 2026 for another successful year.

**Grahame Kelly**  
General Secretary  
Mining and Energy Union