

MEDIA RELEASE

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No place for drug users on mining worksites

The resource industry employer group - AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association)

AUSTRALIA'S national resource industry employer group, AMMA, strongly supports the ongoing campaign by Western Australian Police and the state's mining employers to eradicate the potential safety risks posed by drugs on remote worksites.

This week, police officers from Operation Redwater reportedly targeted airstrips used by BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto in the second phase of its state-wide anti-drug crackdown. Rio and BHPB's support and cooperation follows similar police visits in December to Fortescue Metals Group sites.

"AMMA commends Western Australia's three largest mining employers, BHPB, Rio and Fortescue Metals, in fully supporting the state police's crackdown on the possible possession or use of illicit drugs in our sector," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"It is equally pleasing that in both stages of Operation Redwater to date, only a very small minority of mining employees have been found to be doing the wrong thing. Unfortunately this small minority potentially puts the majority of their colleagues at serious risk."

The continuation of Operation Redwater in Western Australia comes as the Fair Work Commission strongly backs the decision of a New South Wales mining contractor to sack an employee found to have four times the 'cut-off figure' of methylamphetamine in her system while at work.

In his ruling on [Tara Leah Cunningham v Downer EDI Mining Pty Limited \[2015\] FWC 318 \(14 January 2015\)](#), Commissioner Ian Cambridge also heavily criticised the mining union, the CFMEU, for defending the employee's ability to work and arguing she was unfairly dismissed.

"It was highly regrettable to observe during the Hearing that an organisation which apparently conducts campaigns which strongly advocate safety in the workplace, could contemplate a proposition which, in effect, would countenance a person driving a 580 tonne truck whilst having methylamphetamine in their body at a level 4 times the reportable cut-off figure," the Cmr said.

Mr Knott welcomes the Fair Work Commission's ruling and hard stance against the union's position in this case, and hopes future decisions take a similarly unsympathetic view to drugs in workplaces.

"For decades, many remote resource projects have regularly tested for drug detection. It is well understood by employees that this acts as both a deterrent and as an absolute safety measure," he says.

"Unfortunately, this zero tolerance approach is often undermined by the undue interference of third parties which believe they 'know better' or argue on points of 'fitness for work', 'recreational use', or 'level of impairment'.

"Remote mine sites, large construction projects and FIFO villages are not places where you would want to work alongside a colleague under the influence of drugs. Employers must have the right to manage such safety risks and say 'if you touch illicit drugs, there is no place for you on our sites.'"

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