

Thursday, 17 May 2012

BHP dispute

This ACTU Congress declares its full support for the 4,000 mineworkers who have been attempting to negotiate a new Enterprise Agreement at BHP's seven Central Queensland coal mines for over 18-months now.

We note that while the CFMEU, AMWU and the ETU have been negotiating in good faith BHP has refused to do so, a point made clear by its chief of global coal operations Marcus Randolph who declared in an email to staff leaked to the media that the company's demands were "not negotiable now, next month or next year". This is not in the spirit of good faith bargaining.

We fully support the mineworkers in their campaign to protect their rights at work and defend vital safety, workplace and other conditions such as rosters and accommodation that would damage families and hurt mining communities if BHP has its way.

We condemn BHP's pursuit of safety deregulation that would transfer vital safety roles from qualified workers on the job to management. We note that this was the key factor that led to the recent Pike River Disaster in New Zealand in which 29 coal miners perished. We further note that the last three big coal mine disasters in Australia all occurred at BHP mines.

We condemn BHP's insistence on clinging to WorkChoices provisions imposed on BHP coal mineworkers in the last EA reached in the Howard era in 2007, particularly the provision that stripped contract and labour hire workers of equal pay and conditions and have allowed them to become a source of cheap labour to undermine permanent employees.

We note that this dispute has occurred in a period when BHP has made the greatest profit in the history of Australia – \$23 billion and find it repugnant that at a time when the company has never had more it has never done less.

We call on BHP to start listening to its workforce and respect their right to bargain.

We declare the full support of the ACTU for the BHP mineworkers. In the event that the company continues to refuse to negotiate in good faith and inflicts further harm on its workers, their families, mining communities and investors in its coal operations, we will mobilise support throughout the trade union movement in Australia and internationally.