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## Workers at Rio Tinto Alcan deserve better rights at work and higher wages, say unions

The Australian union movement has thrown its support behind a campaign to improve wages, conditions and workplace rights at Rio Tinto's aluminium operations in Australia.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said Rio Tinto Alcan had a proven record of denying workers at its Australian smelters and refineries representation on health and safety and other issues.

"Rio Tinto Alcan has systematically blocked workers from access to unions and the benefits of collective bargaining," Mr Lawrence said.

"Despite the company making \$US14 billion in profits in 2010, employees at Rio's Bell Bay smelter in northern Tasmania earn about \$30,000 a year less than workers in better unionised workplaces.

"But what is worse is the intimidatory tactics by Rio's aluminium management against workers who wish to meet with a union about legitimate health and safety issues.

"Just last month, the Australian Workers' Union won a hard-fought court battle to allow workers to meet with the union about their concerns in the face of strong opposition from management.

"Unions have constructive relationships with Australia's other two aluminium producers, but Rio Tinto Alcan seems to be stuck in the dark ages of WorkChoices.

"Its behaviour has no place in the modern Australian workplace."

Rio Tinto Alcan has smelters at Bell Bay in Tasmania and Boyne Island, near Gladstone, and a refinery at Yarwun, also near Gladstone.

Rio's aluminium operations made a profit of \$US773 million in 2010, a turnaround from a loss of \$US560 million in 2009.

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