



State ALP warning on PM's IR laws

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Body

Western Australia's Labor Treasurer has warned of the risks of further unionisation in the Pilbara amid complaints about rising union activity at mine sites across the state following the Albanese government's industrial relations changes.

And the WA Greens have revealed that they will expect WA Labor to come to the party on major climate and environmental reforms in the event they secure the balance of power in the upper house at next month's election, including a potential multi-billion-dollar levy on the state's gas industry.

Speaking at a business breakfast in Perth, Treasurer Rita Saffioti said WA's resources sector was fundamental to the national economy and had a positive record of continually advancing conditions for workers in the Pilbara and across the state.

"We want to make sure that what has been a very, very good relationship throughout the resource sector continues and we want to continue to support West Australian resource projects, make sure that they continue to be profitable and work well for the national economy," she said.

"It's one of those issues that as a state we want to make sure that we continually raise with the federal government, that WA and our resources sector have very, very good track records in most instances, and continue to make sure that we can get that balance right." Ms Saffioti noted that workers in WA's mining industry had been able to secure major improvements to rosters and conditions in the years leading up to the Albanese government's changes.

"The federal government has its agenda, and we very much -always want to put forward the WA nuances, the fact that WA has been getting the balance right when it comes to -industrial relations and also, in particular, the environment," she said.

WA Labor has already been at loggerheads with the Albanese government over its proposed -nature positive laws, with Premier Roger Cook having twice -directly and successfully lobbied the Prime Minister to abandon the reforms. He was less successful in his efforts to overturn the Albanese government's ban on live sheep exports, and last

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week blamed Canberra for a shortage of GPs that has in turn increased the pressure on WA's embattled health system.

WA's iron ore industry is the biggest in the world. The sector underpins the state's economy and pumps more than \$9bn a year of royalties into Treasury coffers.

Despite Ms Saffioti's note of caution, Mr Cook downplayed the risks to the mining sector from the IR changes. "I know that our resources companies in the Pilbara work very closely with their workforce and their workforce representatives," he said. "We want people, the unions, to work with the companies to make sure that they get great outcome for their members and great outcomes for their industry." Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA chief executive Peter Cock told The Australian that the federal government's collective bargaining changes had allowed the unions to gain a foothold in the Pilbara "for the first time in 30 years".

"There are already some worrying signs that the unions are beginning to flex their muscles in Western Australia's mining heartland," he said.

"Based on what we're hearing from our members, right-of-entry requests for union access to mine sites in the Pilbara have exploded since these laws came into effect." He said workers had been negotiating directly with their employers without union interference for decades, and had become some of the safest and best-paid mine workers in the world. Federal Workplace Relations Minister Murray Watt said: "Helping WA mine workers earn more also helps the WA economy. The Albanese government supports the rights of workers and employers to negotiate pay and conditions, and works productively with the WA government to deliver this."

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