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Page 1 of 1

Casual workers to get permanent jobs

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THE way has been paved for casual mine workers to secure permanent jobs with legislation announced today.

The announcement follows a recent decision by the Fair Work Commission (FWC) provided eligible award-reliant casual employees with a right to request to convert to full-time or part-time employment.

Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations, Kelly O'Dwyer said many people were concerned about security of employment, but if regulation was too onerous, it was likely employers would be less willing to create jobs.

"This issue requires a careful and balanced approach," Ms O'Dwyer said.

"If award reliant employees have the right to make a request and it is subject to reasonable safeguards for employers, it is only fair that the same right is extended to other casuals who currently do not have the same right."

The FWC made its decision after considering evidence from unions and employer representatives over four years.

A department spokesperson said the decision was a carefully balanced approach, but the outcome only applied to em-

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ployees with terms and conditions set by a relevant modern award.

The legislation will now extend beyond employees covered by an award with a casual conversion clause and be applied to the National Employment Standards.

It will formalise the procedure for requesting permanent employment with employers required to provide a response with reasonable grounds for refusal.

Workers will be able to ask the FWC to rule on the response if it is denied.

Queensland Senator, Matt Canavan yesterday welcomed the announcement saying it had been pushed for by Central Queensland MPs, Michelle Landry, Ken O'Dowd and George Christensen.

He said he saw no rationale for the black coal sector to be treated any differently to other sectors.

"(The government) looked at into this situation following a court case against Workpac, which found in favour of the



Federal Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, Matt Canavan.

Photo: Chris Ison

worker," Senator Canavan said.

"We believe it's important the black coal mining sector does offer a pathway to permanent work for casuals as soon as possible.

"The government will consult on how we can make sure that happens in a way that protects employment but the coal mining should ensure it produces local, high-paying and secure employment.

"Too many companies have been overly reliant on a casual workforce.

"We want to make sure workers in Central Queensland have the choice."