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**Big Coal needs to bring labour practices into line to keep public onside: KAP**

COAL worker and Katter's Australian Party candidate for Dawson, Ciaron Paterson, says coal mining companies risk putting their own future on the line if they continue to use labour hire models that drive down wages, institutionalise job insecurity and threaten workers' safety in the industry.

"If the mining companies want the public to continue to support coal then it's up to the miners to keep earning their social license by being good corporate citizens."

Mr Paterson said mining companies' labour practices are ripping millions out of communities in lost wages while raking in record profits for themselves.

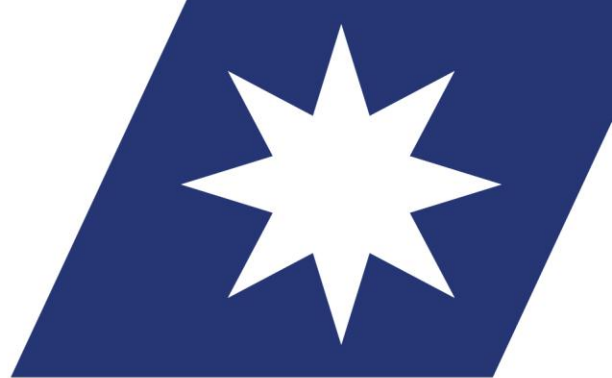
"Aggressive wage-cutting strategies in the mining industry is coming at a time of astronomical profit growth for mining companies.

"The support for mining is strong in this region because of the wealth that's generated for the communities here, not because of the wealth they are generating for the CEO and shareholders."

Mr Paterson said "segregation" is rife in the mining workforce, with labour hire and permanent workers kept separate from each other to undermine workers' solidarity.

"Segregation amongst the workforce is at its finest right now. I'm not saying that all mine sites are like this but there always seems to be a lot of talk amongst casual workers around being segregated from the full-time workforce.

"What I mean by segregation is they try to keep labour hire workers away from permanent workers as much as possible so the permanent workforce can't rally troops to join the unions to fight for better pay and work conditions.



"As a labour hire worker you also find it very hard to get a loan for a car. Buying a house or getting a house loan in a mining town is hard when you mention the words 'I work for a labour hire company.'"

Mr Paterson said the mining companies' practice of employing labour hire workers was also a health and safety issue for workers.

"Labour hire workers won't speak up about safety issues for fear of being ridiculed or labelled as a trouble-maker.

"You will sometimes see people who speak up about safety issues given less meaningful jobs outside the usual scope of work they normally would do.

"So many safety issues do get overlooked if you're a labour hire worker in fear of being labelled as a trouble maker.

"We support these industries because they provide the working person a decent pay and help build the community infrastructure which enhances and sustains the livability of our communities.

"But it's a two-way street and the mining companies need to support the workers and communities who support them."

Kennedy MP, Bob Katter, said Labor hire companies, section 457 visas, and fly in mining had taken mining wages from just under \$200,000 a year to just over \$100,000.

"Some people won't like me saying this, but miners have got to go union and join the CFMEU," he said.

"We've had our pay and conditions screwed down by foreign workers and casual contracts. These mines are in Australia. We deserve the wealth and prosperity from them."

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**For media inquiries, please call 0437548284**