



Union wins offshore appeal

Australia's oil and gas industry says thousands of jobs have been thrown into limbo after the Federal Court overruled the Abbott government's push to ease restrictions on the use of highly skilled foreign workers on offshore projects worth \$200 billion.

In a big victory for the Maritime Union of Australia, the full bench of the Federal Court found against a ministerial determination aimed at negating

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SCOTT BARKLAMB
AUSTRALIAN MINES AND
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changes introduced by the former Labor government that made it harder to hire foreign employees working in offshore areas.

The court upheld an appeal by the MUA and the Australian Maritime Officers Union against a ruling last year, finding yesterday Assistant Immigration Minister Michaelia Cash's determination last July was "not authorised" and "invalid".

The ruling is a blow to the industry, which relies on the use of international crews to perform highly specialised works such as sub-sea pipe-laying at depths of

up to 3000m.

While in Australia, these vessels typically hire large numbers of local workers on temporary contracts to supplement the foreign crews.

Senator Cash said she was considering how to respond to the judgment but stressed that she would take every step possible to restore certainty to the offshore oil and gas industry.

The Australian Mines and Metals Association said the practical effect of the decision jeopardised thousands of jobs in the offshore resource sector.

"Due to the maritime unions' crusade against any non-Australians working in our offshore resources sector, the industry is again thrown into uncertainty and the government is again forced to find a quick fix to a legislative mess unnecessarily created by Labor and the unions," said AMMA executive director Scott Barklamb.

MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin said the court had restored stability in the employment laws protecting ordinary Australians and the government only had itself to blame for the jobs now in doubt.

"This entire episode merely adds to the appearance to our international markets of a chaotic, dysfunctional government in what is an essential and highly efficient and productive Australian workforce and industry," he said.

ANDREW BURRELL