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Coal Industry Tribunal Decisions now available for free access on AustLII

AustLII is making available for free access online scanned digital copies of the complete Coal Industry Tribunal Decisions made between 1941 and 1995. These decisions are of continuing relevance to the coal industry but the printed copies have been hard to locate and difficult to access. With the financial support of the coal industry AustLII has undertaken the digitization and upload of this significant industrial relations resource for the community.

The new database can be found at <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/ACIndT>.

The Coal Industry Tribunal was established in 1947 as a joint creation of the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments and its function was to settle disputes in the coal mining industry in NSW and interstate industrial disputes in the coal mining industry in Tasmania and Queensland. In 1995 the Australian Industrial Relations Commission took over the function of the Tribunal, which then ceased to exist. Nevertheless, decisions of the Tribunal continue to be of relevance to the negotiations between employers and employees in this vital national industry.

In recognition of this significance the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), the New South Wales Minerals Council, Ashurst Australia and the Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation agreed to provide funding support for AustLII to undertake the task of making the decisions widely accessible. This enlightened self-interest will allow unions, employers, legal practitioners, courts and tribunals, industrial relations scholars and other interested members of the community to make use of this resource. As more and more hard copy public and private libraries restructure and downsize the digitization and online availability of rare but important material such as this will become ever more necessary.

Forty-eight volumes incorporating all 4,873 decisions made by the Tribunal have been scanned using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software and the relevant metadata (decision number, parties, citation, etc) captured to enable the linking of these decisions with all the other primary and secondary legal material on AustLII. While the text is displayed as a PDF image of the paper decision the OCR text is searchable through AustLII's search engine and will also be captured through AustLII's award winning LawCite citator to track the citations of these decisions and awards to the present day. The coal industry and the Fair Work Commission were instrumental in providing the hard copy volumes for scanning.

AustLII is Australia's largest and most popular online legal research facility. AustLII's 555 legal databases include current and historical case law, legislation, law reform reports, law journals and the largest national treaties collection on the Internet. AustLII receives about 700,000 accesses per day, and is regularly rated by HitWise as Australia's most used legal website. Since its inception AustLII has provided free access for the Australian public to the essential legal information needed for the rule of law and democracy to function effectively. AustLII's broad public policy agenda is to improve access to justice through better access to information.

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