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Policy change and industry associability: the mining sector in Australia

In the early 1990s the Australian Mining Industry Council was an outspoken, combatative interest group keen to reject what it saw as unwarranted restrictions on the activities of mining companies arising from indigenous and environmental issues. A decade later, AMIC has become a much more sophisticated group, combining strategies of proactive engagement with more hard-nosed negotiating stances on issues like climate change. In the process, the leading mining industry sector association has lost membership, while state chambers of mines have undergone quite distinctive trajectories of change. This paper will explore the factors which have driven these changes, arguing that - while industry-specific factors have played their part - changes in both policy and governance structures have transformed the associability of the sector. These have included not just the more obvious policy developments in the environment and indigenous affairs policy domains, but less obvious factors such as reforms of industrial relations.