

MEDIA RELEASE

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Union hits back at Xenophon over ABCC lies allegation

The trade union representing power workers nationwide has hit back at South Australian Senator Nick Xenophon after he accused the union and its members of lying in a televised broadside.

The accusation came as workers launched a campaign against the Australian Building and Construction Commission's determination that parts of SA Power Networks do not perform an essential service.

Speaking to Seven News Adelaide on Sunday (16 July 2017), Mr Xenophon said: "unfortunately, in industrial disputes, truth can be the first casualty."

"Job security, wages and fairness at work are emerging as crucial election issues in the coming years," CEPU electrical division national secretary Allen Hicks said.

"Unfortunately, Senator Xenophon has put himself very much on the wrong side of the debate.

"Our union had to lobby Senator Xenophon extremely hard to get him to take any action on exemptions from the building code for essential services workers.

"In the end he accepted a fairly flimsy assurance from the Employment Minister rather than pushing for anything more meaningful.

"To have him now claim that his 'safeguard' is acting as intended, in the face of a mountain of evidence to the contrary, and to instead accuse South Australian workers fighting for their jobs of lying to the public, is galling.

"Senator Xenophon should clarify which part of the work performed by SA Power Networks staff he considers non-essential. Was it not essential for customers to be reconnected after the state-wide blackout a few months ago? Does he consider the construction of power stations and maintenance of the electricity grid an optional extra?"

Mr Hicks said that the Senator's comments indicated a lack of concern for working South Australians.

"I call on Senator Xenophon to stand up for South Australian jobs, to apologise for his ill-conceived comments, and to join us in fighting this unjust ruling," he said.

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