

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ben Carter
National Director Media & Public Affairs
Phone 0447 775 507

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Labor Politicians Must Take A Stand Against Construction Union Bullies

Every politician understands that the modern Australia says no to bullying, thuggery, coercion, intimidation and threats of verbal and physical violence. Bullying is not acceptable to the community – whether it's at work, in the street or in a park – it's simply not tolerated.

Yet Labor, which wants to abolish the ABCC (Australian Building and Construction Commission), has offered no explanation of how they will respond to the overwhelming evidence of construction union bullying and lawlessness if they scrap the ABCC.

They have offered no explanation as to why previous politicians, including Paul Keating, Bob Hawke, Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard were wrong when they promised to maintain strong compliance with workplace laws in the building and construction sector and crack down on building unions who didn't play by the rules like everyone else.

And they have offered no alternative plan to protect the 1.1 million workers and 370,000 small and family businesses from the bullying and intimidation that will surge if the ABCC is abolished.

The ABCC is the only independent watchdog who tackles the bullying and thuggery that has plagued the building and construction industry for decades.

Four separate Royal Commissions, dozens of independent reviews and inquiries, and countless Federal Court judgements have all said the same thing – the ABCC is essential in making sure that the rules that apply in everyday communities are upheld on building sites. The unfortunate reality is that construction unions think they are above the law and believe they don't have to play by the same rules that everyone else in the community accepts.

The evidence is there for everyone to see – construction unions are responsible for nearly 90 per cent of breaches of anti-Coercion, Freedom of Association, and Right of Entry rules. They are 10 times more likely to break coercion laws than any other union, 45 times more likely to break Right of Entry laws than any other union and are responsible for every breach of Freedom of Association laws from 2017 to the present.

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Without the ABCC there is every reason to fear a surge in construction union bullying which will undermine the significant community contribution made by the nation's second largest industry and biggest provider of full time jobs. Worse, the entire Australian community will pay more for much needed public and community infrastructure, like hospitals, schools and roads.

Abolishing the ABCC will lead to dramatic increases in union power and strike action will be rife. Construction projects will be drawn out and protracted, resulting in massive blow-outs in costs. We can expect militant unionism to rule construction sites. History tells us that increases in strike action and industrial dislocation are inevitable without the industry watchdog and the industry-specific legislation which it enforces.

Bullying is not tolerated in the community so it should not be tolerated on construction sites. That is why Master Builders will continue to fight to keep the ABCC.

Even Labor Legends want to stop the bullying

"And as Labor indicated this week, when it comes to the construction industry, we support a strong cop on the beat. It is why we will continue with the current Australian Building and Construction Commission arrangements until the 31st of January 2010, when these responsibilities will move across to the specialist division of the inspectorate of Fair Work Australia. Certainly it is critical for the future of the construction industry and we will not tolerate the return of any unlawful practices."

(Kevin Rudd, Speech – WA ALP State Conference, 02 / 06 / 2007)

"Obviously, what the building and construction sector is looking for is that they want a tough cop on the beat. They want to make sure there is strong compliance in the building industry with industrial law and we will be ensuring that by keeping the Australian Building and Construction Commission until January 2010 and then ensuring a seamless transition to a specialist division of Fair Work Australia which would be tough on compliance. We want to make sure that no one is engaged in improper conduct in the building industry, whether employer, union or employee."

(Julia Gillard, ABC News Radio – Batholomew, 02 / 08 / 2007)

"We will be tough by ensuring that the Australian Building and Construction Commission and, when its time comes, Fair Work Australia, are properly staffed and resourced to do the job they were established to do – to eradicate unlawful behaviour in the industry, whether it be perpetrated by unions, employees or employers." "We have always said that Fair Work Australia needs a specialist inspectorate to deal with unlawful behaviour in the building and construction industry. But we will keep it as simple as possible."

(Julia Gillard, Speech – Melbourne, 01 / 08 / 2007)