



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Wage theft laws worthless without a strong regulator**

Government moves to legislate against wage theft will be useless without strong enforcement in the construction industry where the practice is rampant and the regulator worse than useless, warns CFMEU National Construction Secretary, Dave Noonan.

“This government, through it’s biased regulator in the ABCC, has a woeful track record when it comes to policing the bad behaviour of employers in the construction industry,” he said.

“Dedicated laws and harsher penalties for wage theft will be worthless without a regulator that is up to the job of policing employers in the building industry, who repeatedly flout the law, exploit their workers and attack union officials when they try to stand up for our members.”

“Earlier this year the ABCC trumpeted that it had recovered \$1 million in wages for workers since 2016. Yet over the same time period the CFMEU has recovered more than \$59 million in unpaid wages for our members.”

“We know that wage theft is rampant in the construction industry, with an estimated \$320 million in unpaid wages ripped out of workers’ pockets every year. It is a disgrace.”

“The ABCC is a regulator that deliberately ignores its responsibilities. It was born as a union bashing organisation and has never outgrown it.”

“It has proven itself blind to the excessive and illegal behaviour of employers in the industry while hitting workers for the most minor of breaches of civil laws.”

“Since 2013, the ABCC has issued fines exceeding \$27 million to ordinary construction workers for stopping work over wage theft, site safety and political protests. These are not union officials, just workers who have taken action the ABCC deems unlawful under their excessive powers.”

“The ABCC Act says that the regulator has to give equal treatment to employers and unions, yet they have not prosecuted a single employer. Any regulator that refuses to carry out its responsibilities equally must be seen as institutionally corrupt.”

“It is very clear that the Morrison Government’s legislation is about getting rid of effective unionism in the construction industry and giving carte blanche to employers to commit rampant wage theft. They want to crush the only effective regulator in the industry, the union.”

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