

MEDIA RELEASE

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Royal Commission welcome but ABCC can have immediate impact

Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA)

AUSTRALIA's national resource industry employer group AMMA welcomes the Royal Commission into union corruption, but believes a restored Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) can have a more immediate impact in stamping out bribery, coercion and criminality from Australia's construction sector.

"A Royal Commission offers a unique opportunity to lift the veil on lawless and criminal conduct going back decades. Not only can it compel unions, employers and individuals to appear and give evidence, but it can get past the shield of legal professional privilege," says AMMA chief executive, Steve Knott.

"While AMMA supports the government's Royal Commission into union corruption, it should be just one part of a multi-faceted approach to cleaning out any bad eggs and cultures of lawlessness within the trade union movement.

"It is unsurprising that union leaders and the Labor Opposition continue to resist a Royal Commission, but it is unfathomable that they continue to oppose the reestablishment of a regulator with proven results in cracking down on thugs and crooks – the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC).

"A restored ABCC could immediately begin to again stamp-out corruption, bribery and criminality from the construction industry, well before any findings from the Royal Commission are handed down."

Introduced by the Howard Government in 2005 following the Cole Royal Commission, the ABCC noticeably increased productivity, increased compliance with our country's industrial laws and delivered a more equitable and harmonious Australian building industry.

Cole, as well as the Gyles Royal Commission and later the Wilcox Inquiry, all reported similar findings of illegal industrial action, unlawful use of trust funds, intimidation of employers to sign agreements or select 'union friendly' contractors and bribery and other criminal conduct.

"These findings were not fabricated or conjured up by political witch hunts. AMMA has a respectful and effective working relationship with the ACTU and key union leaders, but it is time the union movement gets serious about restoring lost public confidence," Mr Knott says.

"AWU Secretary Paul Howes last week called corrupt union leaders 'traitors' to the movement. If today's union and ALP leaders don't drop the naive denialism and support a restored ABCC to begin cleaning out thugs and crooks, they too will fail to honour and maintain the contribution of their forebears.

"AMMA calls on all union leaders and the federal Opposition to support the passage of legislation restoring the ABCC through the Senate as soon as possible. All citizens, unionists and employers will have nothing to fear from the regulator's return, save for those breaking the law."

Media Contact: AMMA media manager, Tom Reid on 0419 153 407