

MEDIA RELEASE

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Construction industry watchdog must be voted up in this sitting period

(AMMA – Australian Mines and Metals Association)

If the federal Opposition is to remain dormant on the more militant, thuggish elements of the labour movement by blocking the return of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), the senate crossbench should seize its opportunity to take a stand against the unlawful conduct uncovered by existing and past Royal Commissions.

“The Australian Government’s efforts to reintroduce an effective, proven regulator to provide certainty and stability within the building and construction industries must be supported during this sitting period,” says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

“The ALP might be happy to support the status quo, however this doesn’t mean intimidation, coercion and thuggish behaviour should be accepted or tolerated by the Australian community.

“The parliament has an opportunity to immediately address the clear evidence of unlawfulness in the construction sector uncovered in multiple Royal Commissions and before our courts.”

AMMA notes the abolished ABCC was specifically recommended by the Cole Royal Commission in 2003 to tackle the widespread culture of unlawfulness in the building and construction industry.

Further, there is bipartisan agreement on the need for a specialist regulator in the building and construction sector, evident by the former ALP government creating the Fair Work Building & Construction (FWBC) inspectorate at the same time it abolished the ABCC.

Unfortunately, the FWBC was provided drastically reduced penalties and less enforcement powers when compared with the ABCC. Given all eight Senate crossbenchers voted to retain the important coercive powers of the FWBC in May this year, there is clear logic in ensuring the regulator has all the tools it requires to most effectively do its job.

“While the FWBC is doing its best with the limited tools and drastically reduced penalties at its disposal, it simply doesn’t have the teeth to make the same positive impact on the sector that its predecessor did,” Mr Knott continues.

“Under the ABCC the economic and industrial performance of the construction sector moved ahead in leaps and bounds. Independent analysis found the agency helped deliver a 9% productivity increase, reduced industrial action and consumers were better off by \$7.5 billion.

“This regulator isn’t just about cracking down on unlawful union behaviour. It upholds fundamental freedom of association rights for all employees, it ensures small contractors have opportunities to compete for work without undue third party pressures, and it delivers certainty and stability for resources and other major private sector projects.

“With the government set to bring its legislation to re-establish the ABCC on for a vote this sitting period, we call on all political stakeholders to pass this legislation to ensure lawlessness and intimidation in the Australian building and construction industry is eradicated.”

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