



Hanson keeps Coalition hanging

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Employers have swung behind government attempts to convince the Senate crossbench to back the Ensuring Integrity Bill, accusing unions of “deliberate untruths and concocted misrepresentations” about the impact of the proposed union-restricting laws.

Pauline Hanson refused on Monday to guarantee that she would support the bill, accusing the government of using a sledgehammer to attack unions while “looking after” big business.

With Centre Alliance backing the bill, the government needs the two Senate votes of One Nation or the support of Jacqui Lambie to get the bill passed.

As she was lobbied intensely by the ACTU to oppose the bill, Senator Hanson said she would “take my time this week” to have discussions with unions about their concerns, including that officials could be banned for minor paperwork breaches.

“I am not going out there to union bash,” she said, adding that the level of union misconduct was not important compared to issues like the drought.

“I am not going to go out there and fall in line with the government because that’s what they want because they are looking after big business and the multinationals. They can’t even deal with the multinationals here. They can’t even deal with China taking over this country.”

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive James Pearson said there was nothing in the bill that stopped unions raising and responding to safety concerns, and claims unions

would be shut down if they missed a deadline were false: “Just as we must not turn a blind eye to unacceptable behaviour that has come to light in parts of the banking industry, we must not do the same with our registered organisations.”

Australian Mines and Metals Association chief executive Steve Knott said the crossbench should resist misrepresentation by the union movement and vote for the bill. “The measures as they stand would promote greater compliance with Australia’s workplace laws and act as a deterrent to recidivist law-breaking — the type of behaviour that has seen the CFMEU alone rack up more than \$16m in penalties for over 2000 contraventions,” he said.

Unions on Monday attempted to increase pressure on One Nation and Senator Lambie by asking nurses and flight attendants to explain how they believed the bill would affect them.

Teri O’Toole, a flight attendant and secretary of the Flight Attendants Association of Australia’s international division, said the bill would “destroy small unions who simply don’t have the compliance people” to ensure they did not miss important paperwork deadlines.

ACTU president Michele O’Neil refused to acknowledge bad behaviour from the CFMEU but said if it were deregistered under the bill, workers would be left without protection.