



Banks dealt with, says PM, now for unions

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Prime Minister Scott Morrison has vowed to tackle "union thugs" with a renewed push to enact the government's union-busting bill after last week's shock Senate defeat, talking up his reforms passed after the banking royal commission in comments directed at One Nation.

"We believe that union thugs should not go on to building sites and threaten people or in any area of the workplace," Mr Morrison said yesterday.

He said law-breaking union officials should face expulsion for intimidatory behaviour.

"I put laws in place to do that to bankers," Mr Morrison said. "It should be in place to do that to union thugs, too."

One Nation leader Pauline Hanson last week blamed her shock decision to block the Ensuring Integrity Bill in the Senate on the government's handling of white collar crime amid an investigation into Westpac over 23 million alleged breaches of money laundering laws.

Senator Hanson yesterday dismissed accusations that she had bowed to pressure from the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union, saying she had blocked the bill because it was "poor law" and denied she promised the government in a text message that she would back it.

"I never did that, and I've followed up that with a request for the recipients of those so-called texts to prove their allegations by releasing them publicly," she said.

Senator Hanson said business groups must work with government to "stamp out white collar crime ... and deliver fair wages", while the union movement must put an end to "thuggery, corruption, and stand over actions".

Attorney-General Christian Porter will bring the bill, which would make it easier to deregister law-breaking unions and disqualify officials, before the Coalition party room today before reintroducing it in the House of Representatives.

Employers welcomed a discussion paper released by Mr Porter yesterday looking at ways to boost productivity and wages through "more harmonious workplace relations", while unions signalled they would not be ready to talk about co-operation until the government withdrew its bill.

Steve Knott, chief executive of Australian Resources and Energy Group AMMA, said Australia's industrial relations system had "barely evolved since it was first designed in the early 1900s" and remained preoccupied with outdated "us and them" principles.

Australian Council of Trade Unions secretary Sally McManus said if the Morrison government "really wanted co-operation" they would "stop their union bashing".

Mr Morrison said it was "disappointing" that One Nation had reversed its expected support.