



Employers 'lose the plot' over IR changes

EWIN HANNAN

National employer groups have split over proposals by the Business Council of Australia and the ACTU to rewrite enterprise bargaining laws, increasing the likelihood the government will fail to get agreement on workplace reform.

The chief executives of four employer groups are to write to Industrial Relations Minister, Christian Porter condemning the ACTU and BCA proposal they say will give preferential treatment to union-backed enterprise agreements.

Tensions erupted during a virtual meeting this week of the government's enterprise bargaining working group. Sources confirmed Master Builders Australia chief executive Denita Wawn left the meeting in protest, while representatives of the

Australian Industry Group, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Australian Mines and Metals Association expressed strong opposition to the proposal.

Union representatives watched as the employers clashed during the virtual meeting. "The employers spat the dummy," one source said. "It was worse than any ALP factional meeting. They just completely lost the plot."

Sources said ACTU secretary Sally McManus and BCA chief executive Jennifer Westacott put up a proposal that was designed to address concerns about the operation of the Fair Work Act's better-off-overall test and delays in the approval of enterprise agreements.

Under the proposal, preference would be given to agreements reached by registered unions with employers.