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Page 1 of 1

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Resource sector employers have rejected the call by CFMEU boss John Setka for greater rights for workers to walk off the job on safety grounds.

Steve Knott, chief executive of the Australian Resources and Energy Employer Association, accused unions of trying to weaponise occupational health and safety laws for their own political and industrial interests.

Mr Setka on Wednesday said construction workers were "human beings, not slaves" and they needed an increased capacity to withdraw their labour, adding that the next enterprise agreement was "one of the most important we have done".

In an interview with The Australian, he said the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union was willing to fight for its members and get out on the ground and organise, unlike "all these happy clapper unions, the ACTU and all them ... I mean for f..k's sake, talk about running a sheltered workshop".

Mr Knott said employers, employees, government and unions

were on a unity ticket when it came to workplace health and safety, including the need to ensure employees had the best possible and safest working conditions.

"Left-wing union attempts to conflate OHS and industrial relations issues reflect shallow political posturing and is at best unhelpful," he said.

"That said, most unions largely engage with employers constructively and in good faith on workplace safety issues.

"AREEA remains positive that the Albanese government, as did the Rudd/Gillard governments, will resist extreme left-wing union attempts to weaponise OHS in pursuit of industrial relations and/or political interests."

In abolishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission, the government scrapped the Coalition's building code that prevented employers from agreeing to insert different clauses into agreements if they wanted to remain eligible for commonwealth building work.

Ahead of negotiations, Mr Setka said the union would push to reinstate clauses requiring employers to convert casuals to permanents, limit the use of labour hire and engage more apprentices.