

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Crossbench Senators must stand up to building industry lawlessness

*Australia's resource industry employer group – AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association)*

CROSSBENCH Senators are strongly urged to pass a new government bill seeking to maintain the Fair Work Building Construction (FWBC) inspectorate's existing powers, which would send a powerful message that the parliament does not support unlawfulness on Australian building sites.

With legislation to reintroduce the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) unlikely to have the numbers, the government today introduced a new legislative bill that would maintain the FWBC inspectorate's existing powers beyond its current expiry of 31 May 2015.

"The return of the ABCC would be by far the most effective way to stamp out illegality in the construction industry. If this cannot be achieved at present, the only responsible interim course of action is to allow the FWBC to continue its valuable work beyond May 31 with its full existing powers," says AMMA executive director, policy and public affairs, Scott Barklamb.

"Despite its limitations compared to the former ABCC, the existing FWBC has worked vigilantly to investigate and prosecute incidents of intimidation, coercion, bullying and general unlawfulness occurring across Australia's building and construction sector."

Recent examples of cases pursued by the current FWBC inspectorate include:

- Officials and delegates of the CFMEU allegedly breaking the law 78 times on a single building site, including organising 100 workers to withdraw their labour, because the employer refused to remove a safety manager the CFMEU did not like.
- A CFMEU official who allegedly threw non-union building employees and their belongings out of a designated lunch shed at a Queensland building site and obstructed their re-entry.
- An incident where a female FWBC staff member was spat at by a male individual while she was investigating an alleged illegal CFMEU blockage at a site near Sydney airport.
- At least eight CFMEU officials breaking a Federal Court order and coordinating a blockade of a Victorian energy project because a union shop steward had been stood down.
- A CFMEU site entry permit holder who allegedly told workers on a residential building site to stop work or "you're all going to die", despite WorkCover finding no present safety risk.

"The union's leadership continues to falsely claim it's the victim and turn a blind eye to incidents where employers are intimidated, non-union members bullied and female staff of the industry inspectorate are spat at and verbally abused for trying to uphold the law," Mr Barklamb says.

"This is the type of thuggery and unlawful behaviour that our parliamentarians can address by supporting a restored ABCC. If they simply need more time to formulate their position on the ABCC, it is critical they support the government's interim measures introduced in today's bill."

AMMA reminds the crossbench that the powers bestowed on the ABCC were recommended by no less than a Royal Commission, and that the Productivity Commission's 2014 infrastructure report showed the behaviour and cultures identified by the Cole Royal Commission remain rife.

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