




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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MOTION

Australian Building and Construction Commission

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (5.26 pm): I will try to be a bit quieter this time. I rise to speak in support of the member for Kawana's motion calling on the Labor government to support the ongoing role of the ABCC. I am no ideological warrior—

An opposition member: He's a real warrior.

Mr MICKELBERG: I will take that interjection; I like that one.

I thought it would be useful to articulate what the ABCC actually seeks to achieve. According to their website, amongst other things they seek to improve the bargaining framework, promote respect for the rule of law, ensure respect for the rights of building industry participants, ensure that building industry participants are held to account for their unlawful conduct—that sounds familiar—improve work health and safety in building work, encourage the pursuit of high levels of employment in the building industry and provide assistance and advice to building industry participants. I am keen to know: which of those objectives do those opposite disagree with? Which of those objectives do those opposite not support?

Over decades we have seen unlawful behaviour on building and construction sites that has consistently undermined the efficient spending of public moneys. In a previous submission the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry noted that successive royal commissions have found there to be a culture of union thuggery, intimidation and lawlessness. They noted that there has been a recurring cycle of action whereby laws are introduced for reforms like the ABCC and then the resumption of civil standards of behaviour occurs. When a new government comes in—presumably an ALP government—they wind back those reforms and we see a reversion back to union thuggery, intimidation and lawlessness.

In 2016 the Master Builders noted the intentional culture of lawlessness within the building industry. They said that those conditions, combined with the unlawful disruption experienced almost every day on building sites, increased the cost of construction by 30 per cent. Who pays for that? Queenslanders pay for that. It is Queenslanders who miss out on schools, hospitals, aged-care homes and childcare centres because of the costs associated with union thuggery. That is why the ABCC is so important. A strong building and construction sector requires a strong regulator.

Labor's proposal to scrap the ABCC and to reduce oversight is bad for workers, bad for business and bad for every Queenslander. It is the actions of unions like the CFMMEU that is cheating Queenslanders out of more hospitals, schools and aged-care facilities, and they are imposing a building tax. We get enough taxes from the state government without the unions imposing another 30 per cent tax on every Queenslander.

It is unlawful behaviour—like those CFMMEU officials threatening a safety adviser at the Commonwealth Games Village project with threats of, ‘You know what? I know your phone number. I know where you live’—expletive, expletive, expletive. To be honest, I actually found it pretty hard to find a quote that I could use because there is so much unparliamentary language in most of the language that comes out of those—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: Yes, that is right: unlawful behaviour of the CFMMEU. It is disgraceful and it is little wonder that the mining division wants to leave the building division. My question to those opposite is: do they approve of this behaviour? The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. In fact, I would suggest that those opposite tacitly approve of this behaviour, not just ignore it.

I pose a question to those opposite. At least 10 members opposite are members of the AWU, and it is the CFMMEU that in Coffs Harbour pressured CPB Contractors to terminate the contracts of 40 AWU workers. Where are those opposite standing up for their union colleagues? There is one CFMMEU member and 10 AWU members on that side and they are silent.

(Time expired)