



Speech By  
**Jarrold Bleijie**


**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

**MOTION**

**Australian Building and Construction Commission**

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.55 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes federal Labor's policy to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission ('the ABCC');
2. notes Queensland state Labor's support to abolish the ABCC;
3. notes since the ABCC was re-established in December 2016:
  - (a) over \$11.2 million in penalties have been handed down by the courts against the CFMMEU and more than 100 of its representatives have been prosecuted for around 1,400 contraventions of the law for matters like coercion, unlawful industrial action and unlawful entry;
  - (b) of the \$11.2 million in penalties, \$2.98 million relate to 914 contraventions by the CFMMEU and 35 of its representatives in Queensland;
  - (c) this represents more fines, contraventions and officials penalised as a result of ABCC court action than any other state or territory branch of the CFMMEU in Australia; and
  - (d) the ABCC has also recovered around \$600,000 in wages and entitlements for 579 employees in Queensland;
4. supports building industry workers, tradies and small businesses;
5. supports the rights of all workers to a workplace free from bullying and intimidation; and
6. calls on the Labor government to support the ongoing role of the ABCC.

This motion calls on the state government to support the Australian Building and Construction Commission. I saw with dismay that the federal opposition has announced it will abolish it. Why abolish the very body that protects workers' rights in construction in Australia? Why would the state Labor IR minister support the move by Anthony Albanese to abolish the ABCC? In this debate we will hear why this body is so important, not only for businesses in the state but also for workers. This motion is fundamentally about workers—not necessarily about the other elements of the ABCC which are also important. I refer to militant unions in Queensland. I have looked forward to this debate with the Minister for Industrial Relations. There would not be a parliamentary term that goes by in which the Minister for Industrial Relations and I do not talk about these issues. This one is different, because the ABCC has now shown, as will we in this debate, that it protects workers' rights on construction sites in Queensland.

Over \$11.2 million in penalties have been handed down by independent judicial officers in the courts—not some partisan political operators. I thought members of the Labor Party had a lot of respect for these officials. Obviously they do not respect the courts when they are dishing out fines for unions. Of the \$11.2 million in penalties, \$2.98 million relate to 914 contraventions by the CFMMEU and 35 representatives in Queensland. That represents more fines, contraventions and officials penalised as a result of the ABCC court action than any other state and territory in the country.

They have also recovered \$600,000 in wages and entitlements for nearly 600 Queensland employees. If the ABCC is abolished, as Labor proposes, those 600 employees would be without their wages and entitlements. The minister responded in a *Courier-Mail* article the other day by saying

something about sham contracting. She failed to tell the *Courier-Mail* that sham contracting was legislated by the Commonwealth coalition government in 2016 and that the industrial relations omnibus bill before the federal parliament at the moment increases penalties for sham contracting by 50 per cent. The minister missed that one out. She is smiling now. The minister knows that she conveniently left that out of the equation.

In relation to construction sites in Queensland, when this Labor government gets involved there is a further 15 to 30 per cent of taxpayer money used, abused and wasted because of union militant activity. Let the cases speak for themselves. I refer to Townsville's North Queensland Stadium case and to coercion in terms of enterprise bargaining. These are the types of things that are said on work sites, and I quote from the court case—

You need to make your bosses sign this.

The officials also abused the director of the subcontractor, calling him an 'expletive dog' and 'a piece of expletive'. That was the Townsville North Queensland case. At the Sunshine Plaza in Maroochydore there were freedom of association issues. The union was demanding people join it and it was fined \$44,000 for that. The justice said—

Two videos recording the contravening conduct were provided to the Court. The videos show that Mr Fissenden was loud and abusive, and used offensive language to describe (the worker).

Where are the workers' friends in the Labor Party standing up for the workers today? These workers are being abused by CFMMEU officials. I could not talk about all of the cases in Queensland without using expletive after expletive after expletive. This is how the workers on construction sites are treated. We are demanding that the ABCC stay for the benefit of less industrial disputation but also the workers. Let us look at the case of the Grand Central Shopping Centre in Queensland. When another worker heard an exchange and said words to the effect of, 'Isn't that illegal?', Mr D'Arcy said, 'If you want to work here then you have to be part of the union.' Where is the freedom of association? Where is the freedom for the workers to decide whether or not they want to be in the union?

**An opposition member:** Bullying!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection. It is bullying, it is intimidation and the only body stopping it and prosecuting those offenders is the ABCC. We know why Labor wants to delete it and wants to abolish it, because it answers to its militant union masters and—

*(Time expired)*