



AMMA MEDIA RELEASE

29 September, 2010

Employers welcome important first step in retaining building regulator

Resource industry employers have welcomed the appointment of a new Commissioner to head the ABCC [Australian Building and Construction Commission], following the official end to Commissioner John Lloyd's five-year tenure as head of the building industry watchdog.

Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) Chief Executive, Steve Knott, said the appointment of Mr Leigh Johns to the position of Commissioner went part-way to addressing some concerns which had recently arisen in the industry.

"It is no secret some people had genuinely feared the Government may leave this crucial role unfilled. AMMA congratulates the Gillard Government on taking steps to overcome these concerns." Mr Knott said.

"What is important now is for the Government to provide further assurance to resource industry employers by assuring us the powers of both the Commissioner and the Commission itself are not to be diluted under any proposed changes to the existing powers of the regulator."

"The last thing we can afford right now is for political compromises and back-room deals to undermine our capacity to tackle some of the lawlessness still evident in certain sections of the building and construction industry." he said.

"Commissioner Lloyd should be congratulated for the significant role he has taken in challenging what were once widespread practices occurring within the industry. We hope to see Commissioner Johns continue to deliver just as an objective, fair and pragmatic approach, to riding the industry of these problem practices,"

"These practices include threats of bankruptcy for failing to join a union; abuse of right of entry laws; unlawful wildcat strikes; employers being coerced into employing people nominated by the union; and threats of reprisals for co-operating with an investigation of unlawful conduct." Mr Knott said.

Mr Knott said the threat to the investigative powers of the ABCC would probably become most evident when the Gillard Government attempts to roll the ABCC under the auspices of Fair Work Australia as an Inspectorate through proposed legislative change.

"It is highly likely at this time we will see the Gillard Government and the Greens working to have the investigative powers of the existing Commission abolished - in line with demands from the union movement," Mr Knott said.

"The same vocal elements of the union movement opposed to the ABCC were largely responsible for financial and other support supplied to the newly elected Greens MP and other MP's in the House of Representatives."

"AMMA sincerely hopes today's announcement delivers on the Prime Minister's public pledge of having a tough cop on the beat in the building and construction industry," Mr Knott said.

"This is a golden opportunity to send a clear message to those opposed to a modern and productive workplace relations regime, that the Government will not be basing its policy agenda on the ideological battle lines of the past."

"In the words of the Prime Minister herself when she released Labor's Workplace Policy '*The practices of the past are not part of Labor's future for industrial relations*' ." he said.

Mr Knott said AMMA members believed the ABCC had played an important role in enforcing the previously ignored 'rule of law' in the construction industry.

"The fact some union officials seek the destruction of the ABCC is demonstrative of the impact the 'policeman' is having on unlawful behaviour. Law abiding employers, unions and workers have nothing to fear from the ABCC." Mr Knott said.

* Forward with Fairness – Policy Implementation Plan

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