



ABCC 'not enough to stop the CFMEU'

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Employers are urging Senate crossbenchers to back proposed laws allowing for the disqualification of union officials, declaring existing legislation and penalties were “woefully inadequate” in deterring the construction union from law-breaking and disrupting the community.

Direct lobbying by resource-sector employers coincides with the ACTU calling on union members to contact crossbench MPs to urge them to oppose the “dangerous” Ensuring Integrity Bill now before the Senate.

Jobs and Industrial Relations Minister Kelly O'Dwyer will meet Senate crossbenchers this week to try to convince them to back the bill, which she said was a “very strong priority” for the Morrison government.

The bill lowers the threshold for courts to deregister a union and permits courts to disqualify union officials if they commit two civil-law breaches.

In a letter to the crossbench, Australian Mines and Metals Association chief executive Steve Knott said parliament needed more than the Australian Building and Construction Commission to take on the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union.

“The specialist workplace regulator for the building and construction industry, the ABCC, does an admirable job in

investigating and bringing about prosecutions against the CFMEU for thuggery, intimidation and unlawfulness on Australian building sites,” he wrote.

“However, the evidence is overwhelming that Australia's current workplace laws, fines and penalties are proving woefully inadequate in deterring the union from future law-breaking and community disruption.”

Mr Knott said parliament must “put forward a strong and united vision for eradicating all forms of unlawfulness in Australian workplaces”.

“While applying equally to all registered organisations, the Ensuring Integrity Bill would act as a particular deterrent to the continued, recidivist law-breaking of the CFMEU,” he said.

In a message to union members, ACTU president Michele O'Neil said she would be in Canberra to lobby the crossbenchers to oppose the bill.

She said Ms O'Dwyer and Scott Morrison had “one mission — to pass the integrity bill that would allow her and employers to take action to shut down unions and sack union leaders.

“Can you send (the crossbench) a message that you want them to hold firm and continue to say no to this dangerous, anti-democratic bill that would rob workers of their union?” she wrote.

“We need them to understand that it is workers who will be hurt if their union is shut down, and we should have the right to elect our leaders.”