

Thuggery has no place on any work site

Health and safety on construction sites extends to mental health and safety. Sadly, CFMEU officials resort to personal abuse, intimidation and thuggery, as anyone can see from an internet search of “CFMEU abusing inspector in Adelaide”.

Federal Court decisions have continually found that officials have abused the law by ignoring lawful requests that are based around safety requirements. In one recent case, an official moved into an exclusion zone at Adelaide Oval that was set up to protect people from work being done overhead. The official then beckoned for someone else to join him, hardly the action of someone focused on safety.

Courts have penalized the CFMEU and its officials \$1.3 million for investigations undertaken by Fair Work Building and Construction in Adelaide alone, paid for by its South Australian members. Including legal fees, the union fees of more than 2400 members has been wasted because officials didn't follow the law. That's nothing to do with middle class expectations, that's breaking the law.

The construction industry invests millions of dollars every year into improving safety outcomes through a focus on better systems, better training, and a better focus on day-to-day safety, yet every time an official barges onto site, more resources are invested into managing illegal behaviour than focusing on the real issue of safety. Sadly, it is not an isolated incident; more than 100 union officials across Australia are facing prosecution for breaking the law. It is that sort of bullying that drives up the cost of building schools and hospitals.

The South Australian construction industry has one of the best safety records in Australia because it is focused on working with SafeWork SA, a Federal safety regulator and active auditing regimes to protect everyone in the sector, a focus that ignores the class system that Peter Schulz (*The Advertiser*, June 24, 2016) seems to fix upon. The industry rues every injury, and suffers with every unacceptable fatality. But every time, it tries to learn and improve to protect our community.

Federal Court decisions and a Royal Commission have repeatedly condemned the actions of the CFMEU, and that has cost its members and their families dearly. It is time the union learned to respect the rule of law.

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