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## **LAW OF THE JUNGLE TO RETURN TO THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

'Workplace relations in the building and construction industry will return to the law of the jungle. The passage of the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Amendment (Transition to Fair Work) Bill through the Parliament today guarantees this will happen,' said John Lloyd, Director, Work Reform and Productivity Unit at the Institute of Public Affairs.

The Bill is a culmination of several initiatives by the Rudd/Gillard Government to dismantle the tough regulation of the industry.

The building unions have despised the office of Australian Building and Construction Commissioner from the start. The Government has now caved in and utterly removed any pretence of a tough watchdog.

Contractors in the industry acknowledge that even now the ABCC is seen as lacking a tough enforcement capacity.

The new regulator, the Fair Work Building Industry Inspectorate, has a watered down role. Its powers are reduced. Penalties become one third of present levels. Legal remedies against unlawful action are constrained. The opportunities for government interference are increased. A bizarre switching off of some powers is introduced. The capacity to focus on key roles is complicated by 33 additional administrative procedures.

The new regulator will be little more than a traditional industrial inspectorate servicing the industry.

'The Government once again shows a callous disdain for appreciating the pressures Australian businesses encounter when investing in growth and jobs.

'We are about to see a return of coercion, intimidation and thuggery to the industry. Costs will rise and productivity will remain stalled.

'Decent people wanting to go about their business in a lawful manner eventually will face the unenviable choice of giving in to unlawful tactics or getting out,' Mr Lloyd said.

'The Bill is a final repudiation of serious efforts to clean up the industry. The government's surrender to pressure from the unions is a disgrace.'

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