

THU 01 AUGUST 2019

Daily Media Overview




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Integrity bill passes, but Senate has concerns

The Australian, Australia, General News, Ewin Hannan

01 Aug 2019

Page 4 • 402 words • ASR AUD 11,657 • Photo: Yes • Type: News Item • Size: 526.00 cm² • National • Australia • Ministers and Department - Press • ID: 1152812559

Proposed laws making it easier to disqualify union officials and deregister unions have passed the lower house but will not be voted on by the Senate before late October. Lower house MPs voted 75-67 in support of the Coalition's Ensuring Integrity Bill yesterday.

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Audience

94,448 CIRCULATION

Keywords

Attorney-General(2),Christian Porter(2)

Coalition MPs back ACTU critique of union-busting bill

Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, General News, Dana Mccauley

01 Aug 2019

Page 8 • 439 words • ASR AUD 16,808 • Photo: No • Type: News Item • Size: 231.00 cm² • NSW • Australia • Crime Prevention, Enforcement & ACLEI - Press • ID: 1152857275

A Coalition-dominated parliamentary committee is backing ACTU concerns that unionbusting legislation promoted by the Morrison government will put workers' rights at risk. The human rights committee says Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter's amendments to the Ensuring Integrity Bill fail to allay "concerns" about impacts on freedom of organisation and unionists' rights to elect officials.

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Audience

74,348 CIRCULATION

Keywords

anti-corruption(1), Integrity(2), organisation(1)

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Integrity bill passes, but Senate has concerns

EWIN HANNAN
WORKPLACE EDITOR

Proposed laws making it easier to disqualify union officials and deregister unions have passed the lower house but will not be voted on by the Senate before late October.

Lower house MPs voted 75-67 in support of the Coalition's Ensuring Integrity Bill yesterday. The government now faces the challenge of meeting concerns expressed by the Senate crossbench about the proposals. In parliament yesterday, Attorney-General Christian Porter sought to rebuff ALP and union claims that unions could face deregistration by the Federal Court for relatively minor civil breaches.

Mr Porter also again denied Labor and union claims that the legislation would open the way for the nurses' union to be deregistered if members took unprotected industrial action in support of better staff ratios.

The opposition and the ACTU insist passage of the bill would allow the Federal Court to deregister the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation if nurses took unprotected action to protest against unsafe staffing levels at a hospital or aged-care facility.

Mr Porter said yesterday the

claim was patently absurd, saying no nurses' union had engaged in the type of systemic unlawful conduct that would provide the basis for a court to deregister it.

In considering whether it would be "just, in all the circumstances" to deregister an organisation, the government says the bill

expressly requires the Federal Court to consider the nature of the matter giving rise to the application and what is in the best interests of the members of the organisation as a whole.

Mr Porter also rejected claims by Greens MP Adam Bandt that industrial action by bus drivers was potential grounds for deregistering their union under the bill.

The bill will be subject to a Senate inquiry reporting by October 25 before being voted on in the Senate.

Master Builders Australia chief executive Denita Wawn said the

new legislation would mean there were real consequences for registered organisations and officials "who operate like they are above the law".

"The construction unions refuse to abandon their toxic culture and as a result it's getting worse for our members and our industry by the day," she said. "Since the start of 2017 alone, building unions have been slapped with almost

\$8 million in penalties and fines for over 800 breaches of the law spanning almost 40 separate court cases," Ms Wawn said.



01 Aug 2019

Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney

Author: Dana McCauley • Section: General News • Article type : News Item
Classification : Capital City Daily • Audience : 74,348 • Page: 8 • Printed Size: 231.00cm²
Region: NSW • Market: Australia • ASR: AUD 16,808 • Words: 439
Item ID: 1152857275

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Coalition MPs back ACTU critique of union-busting bill

Dana McCauley

A Coalition-dominated parliamentary committee is backing ACTU concerns that union-busting legislation promoted by the Morrison government will put workers' rights at risk.

The human rights committee says Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter's amendments to the Ensuring Integrity Bill fail to allay "concerns" about impacts on freedom of organisation and unionists' rights to elect officials.

Liberal MP Ian Goodenough chairs the committee and sits alongside fellow Liberal MP Celia Hammond, Liberal senators Claire Chandler and David Van, and Nationals MP Anne Webster, giving the Coalition a majority.

The other committee members are Labor MPs Graham Perrett – its deputy chair – and senators Pat Dodson and Nita Green, and Greens senator Nick McKim.

Mr Goodenough said the committee assessed the legislation solely from a legal perspective. "While there have been a number of changes ... including relating to matters the committee previously commented on, these do not fully address the committee's initial concerns," the report said of the amended bill, which is being debated in the House of Representa-

tives this week.

In an earlier report, the committee said the bill – which will make it easier to deregister unions and disqualify officials – was "likely to be incompatible with the right to freedom of association".

The concerns reflect those raised by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, which says the bill would impede workers' rights to collectively organise in pursuit of better pay and conditions. The government is facing the prospect key Senate crossbenchers may block the bill if the government does not comply with their demand for a national anti-corruption body.

Tasmanian senator Jacqui Lambie, who last week threatened to vote for the bill if controversial CFMMEU Victorian secretary John Setka does not resign, declined to confirm her position as she fired up yesterday over "morally corrupt" politicians.

"The Australian people know they're not doing the right thing," she said, citing political donations to MPs who "can be bought as cheap as chips".

Asked if the crossbench threat to block government legislation extended to the Ensuring Integrity Bill, Senator Lambie said she was still getting advice but that politi-

cians must "lead by example".

The government has the numbers to pass the bill in the lower house, where it dragged into a third day of debate yesterday but needs Senator Lambie's support or that of Centre Alliance to get it through the upper house.

Mr Porter said the bill would "actually ... demonstrably help workers" by ensuring "lawfulness on worksites".

He rejected the criticism of the bill, saying it did not "impinge any of Australia's international obligations".

"The Australian people know they're not doing the right thing."

Senator Jacqui Lambie

