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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Abolition of ABCC 'Green Light' for Lawlessness

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) has expressed profound disappointment with Senate's decision last night to pass the Government's Bill to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), which will be an open invitation for a return to the building site lawlessness of the past.

"The ABCC was a sound and effective independent regulator that helped re-establish the rule of law to the construction industry," said HIA's industrial relations spokesman David Humphrey today.

"Moreover, economic benefits have flowed to the community at large from its law enforcement work over the last seven years."

"But the unfortunate reality is that the ABCC's work is far from finished and a culture of coercion and bullying subsists throughout much of the industry. Its abolition is certainly not welcomed by the housing industry."

The fact that the Government has gone much further than simply merging the functions of the ABCC into an inspectorate division of the Fair Work Ombudsman is of additional concern, said Mr Humphrey.

"The legislation that passed last night dramatically waters down the penalties for illegal conduct and allows for parties to that wish to avoid scrutiny to have the laws 'switched off' for certain projects."

"Worryingly, the new regime also permits those that engage in unlawful conduct to go unpunished when a so-called 'settlement' has been reached. These new laws, which potentially allow a lawbreaker to escape punishment by intimidating their victim into silence, benefit no-one but the unions in the building and construction industry."

HIA calls on the Government to now ensure that any regulations required to support the legislation enhance rather than further water down the powers of the new body.

"The new Fair Work Inspectorate must be appropriately funded and resourced to ensure that right of entry abuses, standover tactics, and coercive pattern bargaining do not once again become stock standard in the industry," concluded Mr Humphrey.

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