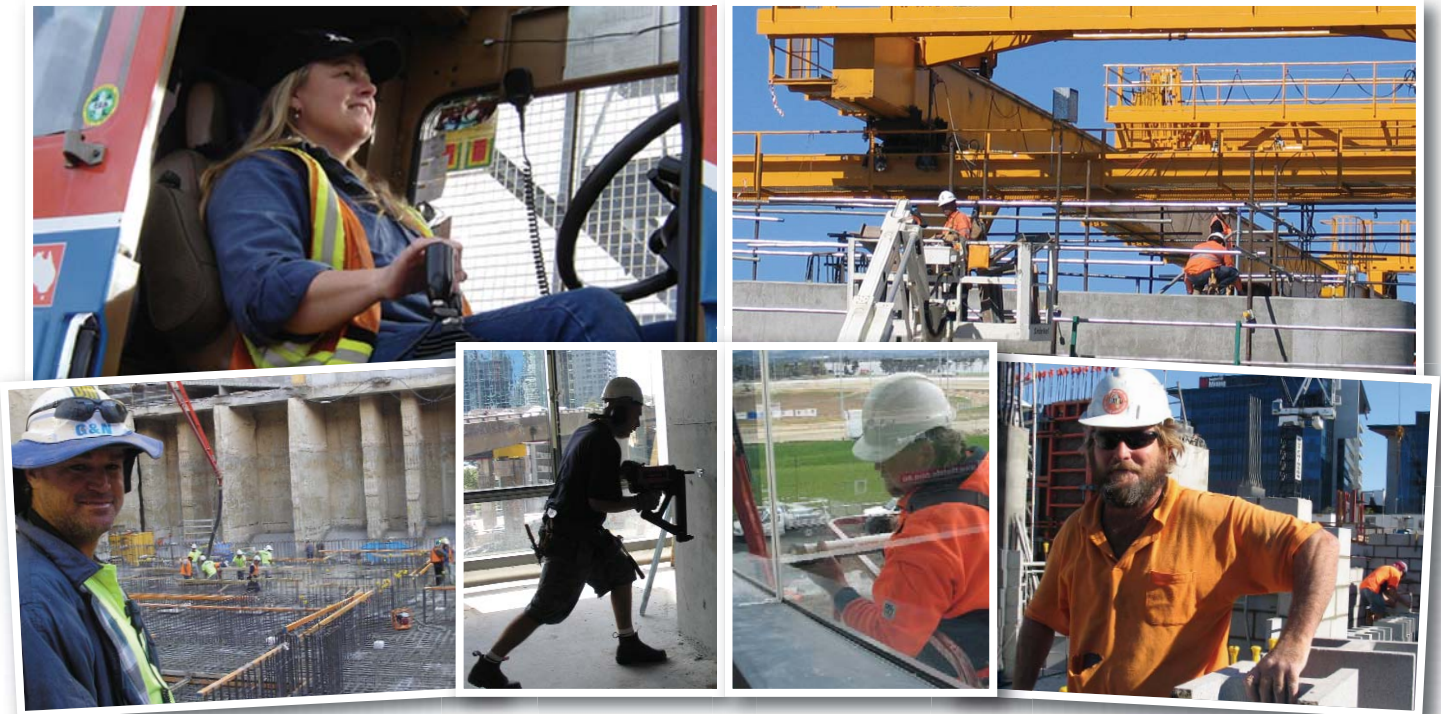


## What about our civil rights?



## Why do workers who build this nation have less rights than other Australians?

**Construction workers fought hard to remove the Howard Government and its extreme WorkChoices laws at last year's election. However, more needs to be done for a fair workplace relations system for our own industry.**

**Right across Australia, construction workers are still under attack from Howard's IR laws, as the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner (ABCC) continues to use its draconian powers.**

Over 50 ordinary men and women have been forced to attend secret interrogations by Howard's ABCC enforcers. If they refuse to answer questions – about issues like what

happened at a union meeting – they can be jailed for six months.

Many more are being threatened with \$22,000 fines and loss of pay if they stop work for any reason – even over safety, in what is one of Australia's most dangerous industries. These powers are bad for construction workers and bad for the industry.

### **Howard-employer scare tactic**

Labor Party leaders were panicked by Howard's and employer scare campaigns during the election and pledged to keep the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) until January 31, 2010.

So, 150 enforcers are employed, and 33 million taxpayers' dollars are spent annually, to continue this intimidation of ordinary construction workers.

ABCC inspectors have no qualms about the tactics they use. Their aim is Howard's agenda — to reduce support for unions and union membership on construction sites. They harrass construction workers at their job sites and with phone-calls and notices at their homes.

Howard's construction laws have been condemned by the International Labour Organisation five times, for breaking conventions Australia has ratified. They offend every principle of fairness for working people.

The Rudd Government should not wait until 2010. They should give construction workers and their families back the same rights as other Australians by abolishing the ABCC and the laws that support it now.

**How can you support Aussie construction workers? Actions over/ ....**

# What can you do ?

## Support our brothers, sisters and our mates in the construction industry today

Howard's ABCC enforcers repeatedly target disputes over safety. Here are just a few examples of what construction workers, and others who have nothing to do with the industry, have been put through.

- ❑ On a suburban building site in WA, workers were forced by their employer to attend questioning, one by one over three days. When some asked if they were obliged to answer questions, the ABCC told them they could be subpoenaed to attend the ABCC office, losing a day's pay.
- ❑ An elected OHS representative, Joe, reported dangerous breaches of electrical safety on a Melbourne job to the union and WorkSafe. As a result, he was forced to attend an ABCC

interrogation and threatened with imprisonment.

- ❑ 19-year-old apprentice, Ivan, is among three targeted for questioning after workers took action on a Docklands site, when one of their mates received serious neck injuries in an incident on the site.
- ❑ In regional NSW, several workers on a John Hollands West Wylong job have been prosecuted by the ABCC after complaints that maggots were found in food at their camp.
- ❑ Even a university lecturer has been threatened with imprisonment and forced to attend an ABCC interrogation, after he witnessed an incident in a city street, as he was passing by a construction site.



**'I was scared I was going to jail. I wasn't able to speak to anyone outside the courtroom, wasn't able to use a phone. It was pretty daunting.'**

Brodene Wardley, crane operator and single mother, interrogated by the ABCC over a safety incident that was already long resolved.

## Is this fair?

- No-one called for interrogation by the ABCC has the right to silence.
- Refusal to attend may result in 6 months imprisonment.
- The interrogations are secret.
- You may not be able to choose your own lawyer.
- And you can talk to no-one, except that lawyer, about what happened to you – not even your partner or your best mate.

Australian unions say these kinds of laws are not justified. They treat construction workers like second class citizens. They break international labour conventions. They are leaving ordinary workers and their families – who have done nothing wrong – living in fear.

**IS THIS THE KIND OF AUSTRALIA YOU WANT? CHANGE IT!**

## What can you do?

- **Spread the word**— pass copies of this leaflet around; watch **Constructing Fear**, organise screenings for your friends, or in your community.
- **Pass resolutions against the ABCC** — at your work-site, union or local ALP Branch meetings.
- **Lobby your local MP** — in person, by phone, by letter: politely tell them your concerns, ask them to get the Labor Government to abolish the ABCC.
- **Join CFMEU activities** to support workers subpoenaed for questioning, sign petitions etc. Contact your local CFMEU Branch for details.



**'I've been working 25 years on the crane and never felt the pressure I had today. For me it was terrible.'** Frank, interrogated about a union meeting he'd attended 12 months before.

To hear more about workers' experiences of the ABCC, watch the film **Constructing Fear** by Joe Loh. [www.constructingfear.com](http://www.constructingfear.com)