



Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union

Construction & General Division

Media Release

31 October 2008

Employment Rorts at Department of Workplace Relations

The Construction Union has exposed employment rorts at a construction site for the new office of the Department of Workplace Relations.

The breaches came to light after a serious accident at a Leighton Contractors site, in Civic on Monday 27 October. A large section of the concrete construction collapsed, narrowly missing workers and halting construction.

Dave Noonan, CFMEU Construction Division National Secretary said workers at the site had been forced into bogus self employment by a Leighton's subcontractor in order to avoid the employers liability for annual leave, sick pay and other entitlements.

ACT Workcover were called to site and issued a notice prohibiting work on the site until a full safety investigation is completed.

"Following the accident, workers on the site were told they would have to be on standby but would not be paid as they are all self employed They are in fact employees, but this employer is rorting the system to cut costs" said Dave Noonan

"It has taken a shocking accident to highlight serious breaches of the law on this site. Workers need to be paid for all the time lost in the accident and they should be engaged on legal terms and conditions," said Dave Noonan.

"The appalling safety practices and abuse of bogus self employment on this site shows that even in the heart of the Governments own employment department, workers safety and entitlements are at risk.

"We have heard a lot about respect for the law in the construction industry from the last government and now this government. Yet on this major project being constructed for Julia Gillard's own department by Australia biggest builder workers are being robbed blind and safety is deficient. The Minister needs to explain how these rorts could occur right under her nose." said Mr Noonan.

The Union is also seeking the full co-operation of Leighton Contractors to investigate the accident, after the CFMEU National safety expert was refused access to the site by the company.

"It is fortunate that we are not dealing with multiple fatalities. If Leighton's have nothing to hide, they will co-operate with the investigation," said Mr. Noonan

Ends

Spokesperson: Dave Noonan 0418 508 762

Media: Gemma Swart 0414 873 291