

# MEDIA RELEASE

16 July, 2009



## Government kills off National Building Code by stealth

The Federal Government has abandoned its promise to keep the National Code of Practice for the Construction Industry, and has instead signalled a return to the old days of union domination of building sites.

As a result of changes released quietly by the Government, unions will be able effectively to reinstate unproductive work practices such as “no ticket – no start”, and construction workers will once again be forced to have building union officials represent them at the bargaining table – whether they want union representation or not.

While the Government claims it is maintaining the code, it recently released a revised set of guidelines for implementing the code that will dramatically change the way it is interpreted and applied.

Master Electricians Australia’s Manager Workplace Policy, Mr Paul Daly, said the guidelines were weighted overwhelmingly in favour of unions, and were clearly a “return on investment” for the union movement’s financial backing of the Rudd Government.

“These guidelines will apply to all Federal Government -funded projects advertised from next month,” Mr Daly said.

“They will hand unions extraordinary power to determine which organisations can be awarded building projects by the Rudd Government, and the hoops businesses will need to jump through to win them.

“The end result will be plunging productivity, and a massive increase in the cost to taxpayers of federally funded buildings works.”

Practices previously banned but allowed under the new guidelines include:

- Industrial agreements under which employers must encourage workers to join a union
- Pro-union propaganda, such as stickers and signs, being posted on work sites company equipment and even uniforms
- Using union delegates to conduct induction processes for new workers
- Requiring an employee to be exclusively represented by a union in a dispute

Mr Daly said the new guidelines also allow the reintroduction of a range of anti-productive workplace practices to enterprise agreements.

“We will again see unions able to dictate to employers the number and mix of staff on worksites.

“These changes will also allow a return of ‘last-on, first off’ or other selection criteria for redundancy that ignore an employer’s operational requirements.

“The reason these types of practices were banned in the original code was because they sap productivity and drive up building costs,” Mr Daly said.

“The Rudd Government promised it would maintain the National Building Code. It should stand by the commitment, rather than killing it off by stealth.”

*Paul Daly is available for interviews. Contact: David Melloy, Executive Manager Marketing on 1300 889 198.*