

ABCC would put unions on a par with companies

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It is important that Malcolm Turnbull is seeking to reinstate the Australian Building and Construction Commission and to legislate so that unions are as accountable as companies. But Turnbull has said little that's new about union lawlessness. Reform of workplace relations should extend beyond the construction industry.

This lack of a policy is despite Turnbull's indication some months ago that his government would publish its reaction to the report by royal commissioner Dyson Heydon which showed that the Fair Work arrangements are not conducive to encouraging employment and productivity. Yet last night Turnbull dodged the question of broader reform except to say that "workplace relations ... is very much in our thinking".

In reality, it is difficult to imagine a more bureaucratic, more interventionist approach to employer-employee relations and one that is far from fair to individual businesses.

Let us hope that the Turnbull government's forthcoming policy will recognise that, with union membership in the private sector only 12 per cent (and which would be less under a deregulated system), the opportunity exists for a significant improvement in economic policy.

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