



Senator Jacquie Lambie
Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Lambie,

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA), represents over 140 religious congregations across Australia with approximately 5,500 Catholic religious, women and men throughout the nation. CRA members and our colleagues serve in education, health care and social services and have grass-roots knowledge of the needs of First Australians, refugees and asylum seekers, people struggling to survive on the margins of society and many others in need of assistance.

The members of CRA are deeply concerned regarding the *Ensuring Integrity Bill 2019* due to come before the Senate Committee in October. This Bill, as our submission states, *strikes at the very heart of the union movement*, because it either takes away or considerably lessens the ability of workers to organise and run their own unions, deciding who leads them. The Bill aims at reducing the rights of working people to have a voice in determining their conditions of work and rates of pay. It also gives considerable power to the government, employers and other “self-interested” parties to: deregister a union, disqualify a person from office, exclude certain members and impose an administrative structure. In essence this Bill allows for significant political, corporate and judicial interference in what should be the free and democratic functioning of a union. It proposes conditions far more stringent than those applied to business corporations.

Recent revelations regarding the exploitation of franchise employees, food deliverers, visa-holders and backpackers, the rapid increase in stone masons diagnosed with silicosis and the ever present risks to miners and construction workers reinforce the need for workers to be supported by an independent union movement. Unions are particularly necessary for the protection of vulnerable, low paid workers.

In your recent speeches you make the point that you will not support the Bill unless John Setka resigns, but to support or oppose this Bill on the basis of one man and one union would be to do a deep disservice to the thousands of unionists who have no affiliation to the CFMEU. The largest union is, in fact, the Nurses’ Union which is affiliated to no party. It is, to our way of thinking, bad legislation if the motivating force for a Bill is opposition to one man and one union rather than to bettering the lives of working people.

CRA urges you to consider the welfare of working people and the undesirable consequences of imposing this unnecessary, limiting and undemocratic Bill of the working people of Australia. We are always happy to have a further discussion.

Yours sincerely

for CRA Justice Committee
15 September 2019