



Senator Malcolm Roberts
One Nation Senator for Queensland

19 March 2020

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Leader of the Opposition
PO Box 5100
MARRICKVILLE NSW 2204

Dear Mr Albanese

May I say how pleased I was to see you standing side-by-side with a Queensland coal miner in Mackay recently to launch the CFMMEU's report on the wage implications of casual mine work. It is good to see you supporting coal miners and the Australian coal industry.

For your information, there seems to have been a lot of banter and public political points scoring about the casual black coal mine workers, especially in the Hunter Valley. Yet the reality is that there are many abused and crippled workers who need our help. Today, I seek your support to put things right for these workers and union members.

In the recent McKell Institute Report "Wage cutting strategies in the Mining Industry" March 2020, the author refers to abuses at BHP's Mt Arthur Mine on page 16 but conveniently omitted to mention that the CFMEU Northern Mining and NSW Energy District was a party to the agreement (and others), that led to the 40% underpayment, the loss of entitlements and the abuse of so many casual black coal mine workers.

In summary, I am informed that Chandler MacLeod Group (CMG), as the labour-hire employer, may have colluded with the CFMEU Northern Mining and NSW District to rip-off casual workers by negotiating a 'sham' agreement. I am told that they underpaid the casual workers 40% knowing these workers were slipping through the 'cracks' in the industrial relations and workers compensation insurance systems. To everyday Australians including me, this is immoral.

CMG then under-reported the number of people on site and the types of jobs they did, declaring that the casuals who were working at the coalface were 'administrative staff' in order to save a few dollars on insurance premiums. Surely this is illegal, yet the CFMMEU did not take action.

I believe that the CFMEU Northern Mining and NSW Energy District, as the representative of the Hunter Valley casual black coal mine workers, let these and other mine workers down. They were happy to take their membership fees, but it was "a fee for no service", which sounds similar to the banks.

This union also seems to have done a 'deal with the devil' in agreeing with CMG to grant industrial peace and in agreeing that the CFMEU Northern Mining and NSW Energy District would not fight for these workers' rights. It concerns me that the union did not launch a class action on behalf of these disadvantaged workers when the union did so for others nearby.

I am informed that the CFMEU Northern Mining and NSW Energy District is directly or indirectly a part-owner of the insurer that rejected crippled workers' claims for compensation leaving them with just over \$400 a week on which to live.

Coal LSL, a government organisation which is ruled by the CFMMEU and the Minerals Councils, is no better. They just accepted timesheets from employers without questioning them, and when employees complained Coal LSL ignored them. But now it turns out that after I questioned Coal LSL at Senate Estimates, these workers were right and Coal LSL was wrong.

In using labour-hire as a way of reducing mine production costs, the lower pay rates and the significant loss of entitlements has seen the coal industry and BHP in particular join various national retailers and others accused of ripping-off workers with wage theft.

One of the crippled miners, Mr Simon Turner, repeatedly advised the miners' federal member for the Hunter electorate, Mr Joel Fitzgibbon, yet sadly Mr Fitzgibbon failed to take action.

Further, I am advised that your party under Mr Shorten's leadership took the policy of equal pay for equal work to the last federal election.

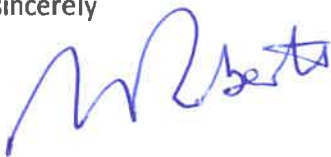
Mr Albanese, these matters require co-ordinated and integrated national responses, real action by the Australian Government and the States to rectify the serious issue of employer non-compliance and to introduce tougher employment laws to deal with wage theft and exploitative labour-hire arrangements.

I invite you to become a part of the solution and contribute to this effort to put things right for these everyday Australians and for casual coal miners everywhere.

I would be happy to meet with you to brief you in relation to the serious immoralities and irregularities and the problems the Hunter Valley casual black coal miners and their families face in your home state.

I await your response in due course.

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Roberts
Senator for Queensland