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Page 1 of 2



Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese at the National Farmers' Federation conference in Canberra on Tuesday. Picture: Gary Ramage

**CLARE ARMSTRONG**  
FEDERAL POLITICAL REPORTER

WOMEN in construction have been allegedly targeted with sexist slurs and physical abuse by "rogue" union officials, as the federal government warns a Labor pledge to dump the sector's regulator amounted to "condoning" the

alleged behaviour.

The Australian Building Construction Commission (ABCC) is taking court action against two members of the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining Energy Union (CFMMEU) accused of verbal

and physical abuse toward women on building sites.

Union official Travis Brook has been accused of asking a female worker about her sex life twice while on a South Australian building

project in January, making her feel "uncomfortable and embarrassed".

The ABCC will allege during his inspection of the site, Mr Brook spoke to a female labourer he knew about her Christmas and asked, "were



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you and (her husband) humping like rabbits the whole time?"

In another case, CFMMEU representative Gerald McCrudden is being taken to court for alleged repeated verbal abuse, and for twice making physical contact with a female health and safety manager at freeway project in Victoria last year.

At one point during the visit the female manager accused Mr McCrudden of putting words in her mouth.

The ABCC alleged he responded by saying "I would never put anything in your mouth, you're disgusting."

ABCC commissioner Steve McBurney told The Daily Telegraph women were "disproportionately" targeted by members of the "rogue union" both in person and on social media.

"There is no place for that type of language in a modern Australian workplace, and I don't accept that there's a different standard in the building and construction industry," he said.

Industrial Relations Minister Michaelia Cash said it was "high time" Labor stood up for women in construction,

instead of abolishing the ABCC and effectively "condoning" their poor treatment.

"These latest examples are unfortunately part of an appalling history of the CFMMEU's treatment of women," she said.

Asked who would enforce the right of women not to be sexually harassed or abused in the construction sector if the ABCC was abolished, a Labor spokesman said the party made "no apolo-

gy" for its pledge to scrap the "politicised and totally discredited

organisation".

"(The ABCC) was set up by the

LNP to dismantle unions and undermine the pay, conditions, and job security of ordinary Australian workers," a Labor campaign spokesman said.

CFMEU construction and general division national secretary Dave Noonan said the matters raised by the ABCC would be "tested in court".

"We believe the ABCC allegations have been put out there to damage the union in the run up to the federal election and should not be taken at face value," he said. Mr Noonan said the union had a "proud record of supporting women in the construction industry," highlighting a successful 2021 High Court matter guaranteeing women the right to have dedicated toilets on building sites.



Michaelia Cash