



Workers to rally in support of equal rights and against coercive powers in the building industry

Coercive powers that could result in a worker going to jail have no place in Australian workplaces, say unions.

Thousands of workers will today rally in support of a South Australian building worker Ark Tribe who faces charges for raising health and safety concerns at his worksite.

The union protests are aimed at sending a strong message to the Federal Government that there should be one set of laws for all Australian workers.

Mr Tribe faces up to six months jail for allegedly failing to attend a compulsory interrogation by the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

He has pleaded not guilty, and will appear in the Adelaide Magistrates' Court this morning.

"Building and construction workers should be able to go to work each day like everyone else without fear that they could be jailed simply for exercising their civil rights as union members," Mr Lawrence said. "Yet that is exactly the situation Ark Tribe finds himself in.

"There were serious safety issues at his worksite which he raised concerns about. Next thing, he found himself ordered to appear before an ABCC interrogation.

"For refusing to tell the investigators about what took place at a workplace safety meeting, he could end up in jail for six months. These types of coercive powers have no place in Australian worksites. There should be one set of laws for all workers, regardless of their job.

"There are established laws to deal with criminal behaviour, but additional coercive powers in the construction industry are oppressive and an infringement of basic rights."

"The ABCC was set up by the Howard Government and its track record shows its sole purpose is to demonise and persecute building workers. It has made no contribution to improving safety or productivity in the industry and should be immediately abolished."

Details of rallies in support of Ark Tribe:

NSW: 11am at Sydney Trades Hall, 377 Sussex Street, Sydney

Victoria: 9.30am outside the offices of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, 533 St Kilda Road Melbourne (ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence to speak)

Queensland: 11am Waterfront Place, 1 Eagle Street, Brisbane

South Australia: 11am Adelaide Magistrates Court 260-280 Victoria Square, Adelaide

Tasmania: 9.30am outside the offices of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, 142 Elizabeth Street, Hobart

Western Australia: 9.30am outside the office of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, QV1 building St. Georges Terrace, Perth.

Media contact: Mark Phillips ph: (03) 8676 7266 or 0422 009 011; email: mphillips@actu.asn.au