

Thursday, 1 August 2019

Government members voted for bill 24 hours after voicing human rights concerns

Three Government MPs who voiced serious and ongoing human rights concerns over the Coalition's union-busting legislation in a report released on Tuesday voted in favour of that same legislation in the lower house yesterday.

Ian Goodenough, Celia Hammond and Dr Anne Webster all voted in favour of the bill, despite their committee doubling down on its long-held concerns that the bill "is likely to be incompatible with the right to freedom of association".

The concerns of the Joint Committee on Human Rights – a Coalition-dominated body – have been consistent since 2017, have not been assuaged in newer versions of the bill, and echo the advice of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights which published a report slamming the bills in July this year.

The ICTUR report said that the bill violated two separate international laws, had no equivalent in an industrial democracy and was most akin to laws that exist in authoritarian, anti-democratic regimes.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"On Tuesday members of this Government said that this bill, which will weaken the rights of working people, threatened basic democratic freedoms.

"On Wednesday they voted for it.

"It should send a chill down the spine of all Australians that their Government will brazenly vote for extreme, dangerous and anti-democratic laws less than 24 hours after admitting they're likely to violate basic human rights.

"Christian Porter has attempted a slick sales job on this bill but the truth is out – this is a dangerous, extreme and anti-democratic piece of legislation that will only benefit the Morrison Government and bad bosses.

"It's time for the Morrison Government to abandon its ideological anti-union obsession and withdraw this bill."

ENDS

Media contact: Lachlan Williams 0447 682 027, lwilliams@actu.org.au; ACTU Media: 03 9664 7315