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Leaked document confirms Government's real Royal Commission agenda

A leaked secret document from the Attorney-General's Department requiring all Commonwealth agencies to produce information about all contact and activity with unions highlights the real motivations behind the Royal Commission, the ACTU said today.

"The ACTU has said from the start that the Government had entirely political motivations for starting the Royal Commission, and this document proves it." said ACTU Assistant Secretary Tim Lyons.

"It's now beyond doubt that the Government is out to get trade unions and unionists any way they can. The Government appears to be on a political witch hunt at the tax payer's expense," said Mr Lyons.

The Royal Commission has the power to seek relevant information, said Mr Lyons.

"Why is the Attorney-General's Department seeking information that hasn't been asked for, and which goes well beyond the Commission's Terms of Reference?"

"There is no justification for the department to seek such broad ranging information going back a decade. A blanket campaign against unions would be a serious, anti-democratic abuse of power," said Mr Lyons.

The questions the ACTU has are:

- Is the Government trying to get around the long-standing practice that departments will not provide Ministers with briefs, or other documents relating to the decisions of the previous Government, whether or not those documents are Cabinet-in-Confidence?
- How is asking agencies if, and to what extent, the Royal Commission has approached them relevant to any purported need of the Commonwealth to respond to the Royal Commission "in a timely and efficient manner if the Commission requires or requests production of documents, things or other information"?
- Is the Government attempting to smear and delegitimise unions within the public service by implying there is no legitimate relationship between Government and Trade Unions? For example, that union officials:
 - Should not be consulted about government policy – even in relation to industrial laws
 - Should not be part of workplace relations matters in respect of Commonwealth employees
 - Should not be appointed to government positions – even unpaid advisory boards

"It's ludicrous to suggest there is no legitimate reason for unions to be talking to government departments. Consultation and dialogue between the labour movement, Governments and the public service on policy matters that are important to the community are not just legitimate, they are a vital part of what our members expect us to do." said Mr Lyons.

Media contact: Kara Douglas, 0418 793 885