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Royal Commission: Abbott's political circus rolls on

The Trade Union Royal Commission will cement its reputation as a fundamentally political exercise today with a third Labor leader being subjected to Mr Abbott's tax-payer-funded, political attack

\$80 million of tax payer funds has been spent to conduct a Royal Commission targeting Mr Abbott's political opponents – including three Labor leaders, an unprecedented and a gross misuse of the privilege of government.

Every Liberal Prime Minister since Billy McMahon has had at least one Royal Commission into trade unions – it's their attack of choice against their political enemies – but Mr Abbott has taken this to a new level.

This Royal Commission has no claim to independence, impartiality or adherence to due process. Examples of this include:

- Determining last year that it had finalised its inquiry yet caving in to Government pressure and intervention by the Attorney-General to extend the inquiry for another year
- Leaking prejudicial information to the media before its public release
- Releasing a "discussion paper" to media before public release with content recommending various new laws that align closely with Liberal Party policies such as those in the Registered Organisations Bill rejected by the Parliament in March
- Subjecting a former spouse of a Labor leader to its inquiries
- Failing to afford union witnesses natural justice by making serious allegations without proper notice and not allowing those witnesses to properly respond
- Disregarding objections from legal representatives that the Commission has gone beyond the parameters of the terms of reference

The ACTU's consistent view is that this Royal Commission is about attacking the ability of unions to deliver outcomes for working people – jobs, wages, conditions and safety.

As an election looms, the Abbott Government is using this Royal Commission to drain the resources and divert the attention of the union movement, which has been so effective in campaigning against Liberal Party attacks against Rights At Work.

The trade union movement is committed to strong, democratic and accountable unions and without effective unions, employment conditions in Australia would go backwards.

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