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Abbott Royal Commission announcement a red-hot political stunt

The announcement today by the Federal and Victorian Liberal Governments is a red hot political stunt and proves the Royal Commission into trade unions is a fundamentally political exercise.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Tim Lyons said the fact the Victorian Police Commissioner was only first told of the taskforce last night by the Royal Commissioner, ahead of an announcement by the Prime Minister and Victorian Premier in the middle of an election campaign is beyond coincidence.

“The Royal Commissioner writing to Victoria Police at the eleventh hour ahead of an announcement designed to suit an election timetable is a new low for the Liberal Party,” Mr Lyons said.

“The ACTU has said from the outset that this Royal Commission is a political inquiry and the actions by the Royal Commission, Prime Minister Abbott and Premier Napthine confirm this.

“Today's fly-in-fly-out announcement by a Prime Minister with nothing to say to Victorians about a positive agenda for the election, and a Premier in deep trouble is just a transparently political attack on Victorian workers and their unions.

"Any time you see politicians, as you did today, announcing what the police are going to do, it's deeply political, particularly when the police aren't there.

“This whole affair stinks of politics and Victorians in particular will be asking why Mr Abbott didn't fly down to announce a jobs plan, talk about health and education or explain his petrol tax.”

Mr Lyons said Attorney-General Brandis flagged the taskforce in February but Prime Minister Abbott waiting until the Victorian election to talk about it further proved it was a political stunt.

“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.

“What we have today is a re-announcement of something that is already in the public domain during a Victorian election campaign when it looks like the Liberal Party could lose.

“The ACTU has consistently said that criminal behaviour and corruption must be dealt with by the police and the courts and we believe the Police should be given the resources they need to make those investigations.”

Mr Lyons said the Royal Commission into Trade Unions has not investigated how major construction companies, including major publicly-listed companies have subcontracted to dubious individuals – it has just focused on trade unions.

“It's a \$50 million PR exercise by the Liberal Government with the bill being footed to taxpayers.”

Media contact: Carla De Campo, 0410 579 575 or Elisa Fernandes on 0438 021 203