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MEDIA ALERT

Opening Statement to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Secure Local Jobs Code

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canberra, ACT | Monday, 2 November 2026

Thank you, Chair and Committee members, for the opportunity to appear today.

We ask that our written submission be taken as read.

The Productivity Commission has estimated that the annual regulatory burden on Australia's housing construction sector is between **$18 billion and $47.5 billion.** That is a staggering cost for an industry already struggling with declining productivity, tight margins and persistent inflation.

At a time when governments are resource-constrained, we should be removing unnecessary regulation, not perpetuating it.

We are here today because the case for retaining the Secure Local Jobs Code has simply not been made.

Our position rests on four key points.

Firstly, there is no evidence to justify its continuation. The Government has failed to demonstrate, through credible monitoring, evaluation or performance measures, that the Code delivers meaningful outcomes for workers, businesses or the community. In previous inquiries, ministers and officials have been unable to substantiate its effectiveness beyond anecdotal claims.

Secondly, the Code duplicates existing laws. Workplace health and safety and workplace relations protections have advanced significantly since its introduction. These obligations are already regulated

and should be enforced by existing Commonwealth and Territory authorities. More regulation does not automatically mean better outcomes.

Thirdly, the compliance burden is excessive. Our industry is overwhelmingly made up of small and medium-sized, generally family-owned businesses. The cost of complying with the Code simply to compete for government work creates an unnecessary barrier to participation, reduces competition and ultimately increases costs for taxpayers.

Fourthly, the Government itself acknowledges confusion about the Code's purpose. If a regulatory framework remains poorly understood after years of operation, that raises fundamental questions about its design, effectiveness and necessity.

The Government's own submission repeatedly emphasises what the Code is **not** responsible for, including local industry participation, procurement outcomes and awarding contracts. That only reinforces the question of what unique outcome the Code is achieving.

There is also an opportunity cost. An already resource-constrained government employs skilled people to administer this additional layer of regulation. Those resources could be redirected to areas delivering greater value to the Canberra community.

Let me be clear: this is not an argument against safe workplaces, fair employment conditions or responsible procurement. These are non-negotiable.

It is an argument for evidence-based regulation, efficient government and taking accountability for the burden placed on small and middle-sized businesses.

The central question for this inquiry is straightforward: what does the Secure Local Jobs Code achieve that existing workplace laws and regulators do not?

Supporters point to individual examples and good intentions, but after years of operation there remains no evidence demonstrating the Code delivers unique outcomes beyond those mechanisms already available.

Until that question can be answered with evidence, the case for retaining the Code remains unproven.

We thank the Committee for its consideration and welcome your questions.

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