Jade
BENHAM MP
NATIONALS MEMBER FOR MILDURA
Shadow Minister for Water
Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs
Shadow Minister for Disability, Ageing, Carers & Volunteers

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Carroll Government's Bill a backdoor ban on non-preferred unions

The Carroll Labor Government's Associations Incorporation Reform Amendment Bill 2026 has nothing to do with protecting workers and everything to do with protecting Labor's union donors from competition, Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs Jade Benham said today.

The Bill, introduced last sitting week, bundles genuine action against Neo-Nazi and terrorist organisations with sweeping new powers to strip incorporation from independent worker associations.

Genuine, credible groups like Red Union, the Independent Transport Union and the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union have been bracketed with extremists despite representing thousands of Victorian teachers, nurses and retail workers.

"The government wants Victorians to believe this Bill is about stopping scammers and stopping extremists. It is not, it is about cutting out the unions that don't fund their party," Ms Benham said.

"These are not fringe outfits. They are organisations representing tens of thousands of teachers, nurses and retail workers who simply wanted a better alternative and built one."

Victoria already has strong laws dealing with hate groups and extremist conduct, bringing into question the government's motives.

This Bill would effectively hand Consumer Affairs Victoria the power to wind up legitimate, professionally run associations that workers have freely chosen to join.

"It is hypocritical for a government that for years has been in lockstep with the corrupt CFMEU to now punch down on legitimate unions that represent thousands of hard-working Victorians who have been struggling for their right for fair pay and decent working conditions," Ms Benham said.

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"What Labor won't say is which associations will be caught and which will be quietly exempted. Victorian workers deserve to know who this Bill is actually targeting before Parliament is asked to pass it.

Ms Benham said The Nationals would not support the Government using community concern about extremism as cover to entrench Labor-aligned unions and shut out competition.

"If the government genuinely believes there's a gap in the law around extremist organisations retaining incorporated status, withdraw this Bill and bring back a narrow one that deals with that alone. Don't use it as an excuse to crush every union that isn't paying Labor's bills."

Red Union spokesman and National Secretary of the Teachers' Professional Association of Australia Edward Schuller said the Government is facing defeat on this Bill, with several political parties, crossbench MLCs, and major institutions all opposing it.

"This Soviet-style move to ban unions that don't campaign for the Government is completely antithetical to the Australian way of life."

"It's for this very reason the Bill has faced such an immense backlash in the community. The tens of thousands of frontline workers we represent are appalled that the Government is attempting to silence them just months from the election."

"We've brought together diverse community groups and representative organisations who all believe in the fundamental right to freedom of association. It's time the Carroll Government listens to them and withdraws this anti-worker Bill. Otherwise, we'll keep fighting and restore workers' rights on the floor of Parliament."

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