

Building employers branded as 'Taliban'

THE nation's main building union which lobbied Julia Gillard to change the rules for assessing workplace agreements in the construction industry, yesterday described employers described the new arrangements as the "Work Choices Taliban".

The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union yesterday said it first wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister on August 11 seeking the changes that employers claim could lead to a return to unproductive work practices in the building industry.

Family First senator Steve Fielding has accused the Rudd government of striking a "secret deal" with the union.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations wrote to employers and unions informing them that Ms Gillard had instructed it to change the way workplace agreements in the building industry were assessed.

Ms Gillard introduced new guidelines in July to apply to all projects that were the subject of an expression of interest or tender from August

The Master Builders Association has written to Ms Gillard seeking to have the decision overturned.

Dave Noonan, the national secretary of the union's construction division, said it had pointed out to Ms Gillard there was confusion about how the arrangements should apply.

"What is clear is that what will be able to be in certified agreements in the construction industry is exactly what will be able to be in certified agreements anywhere else under the Fair Work Act and that those things that are prohibited under Fair Work will be prohibited in the building industry," he said.

"The point about the Master Builders Association is they fail to recognise there has been a change of government

"They are the Work Choices Taliban and they are clearly infested with former Liberal Party staffers whose attitude to industrial relations is akin to the Japanese soldiers who spent 30 years in the jungle after World War II refusing to believe the war is over." (SOURCE: *The Australian*, 22.10.09)