

Time for building giants to show some spine

RICK WALLACE

AUSTRALIA'S construction giants Leighton and Lend Lease must stop bowing to union demands on building sites and help the rest of the industry to roll back their dominance, the chief of labour hire company Troubleshooters Available says.

Industry veteran Chris Mazzotta has joined a small group of building industry chiefs speaking out against the unions, and against head contractors for acceding to their demands for lavish wages and conditions across sites.

"I am blaming the builders for getting us into this situation," he said. "They have just rolled over.

"The general public and investors out there need to be made aware of what's been happening.

"I blame the builders for allowing the unions to have all this power. If they put a stop to that, I think we would be a much better industry."

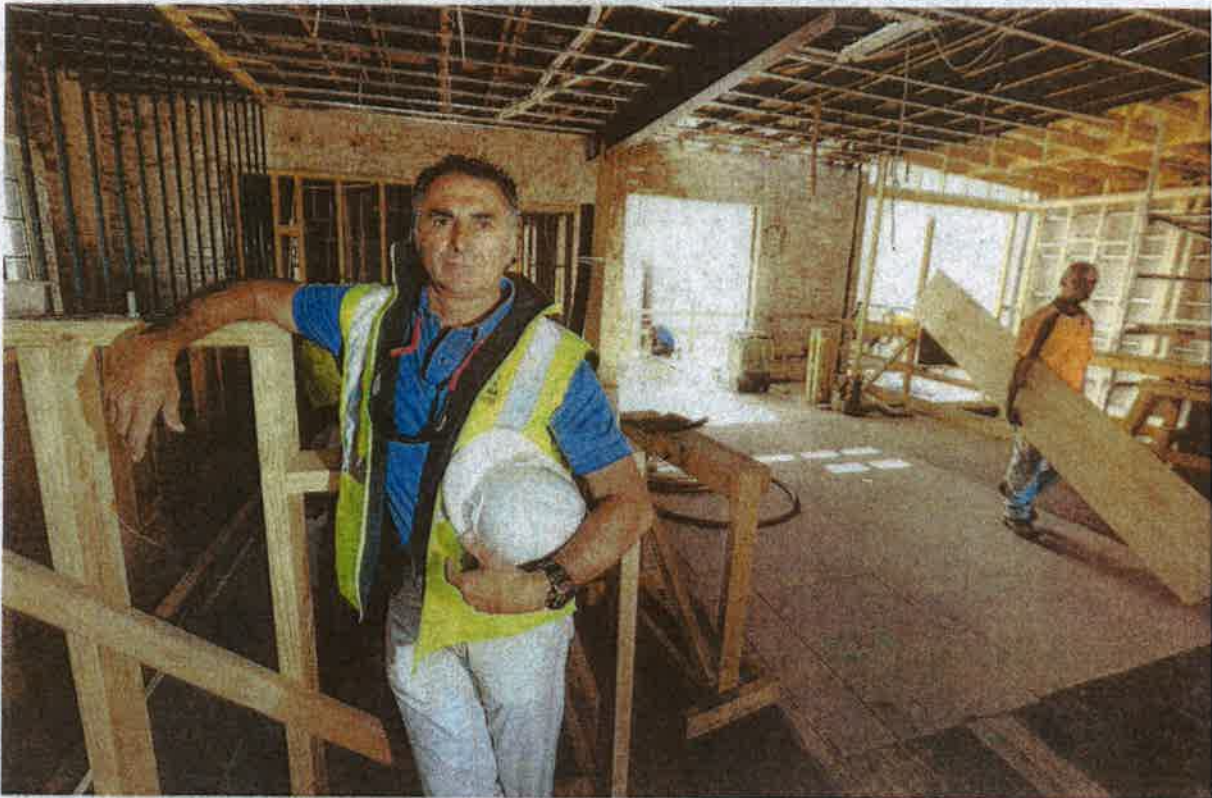
Mr Mazzotta said Victoria and Western Australia were "basket cases" in terms of union control of the industry and the situation needed the return of the Australian Building and Construction Commission and dramatically increased fines to curb the activities of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union.

The Troubleshooters boss has built an alliance of 170 builders opposed to union control but said few were willing to speak out, and some of them still "go to water" amid pressure from the CFMEU.

"The way they (the CFMEU) do it is, well let's say you have a \$2 million job. They say: 'We are going to offer you Joe Blow here, he's been a shop steward for some time. We recommend that you take him. If you can't take him, we can't guarantee the job is going to go well for you.'" Mr Mazzotta said.

Troubleshooters engages its staff as subcontractors and refuses to operate under union-endorsed conditions, which specify 26 rostered days off, a 36-hour week and high pay rates, and allow for a strong union presence on sites.

Major builders may ideologically oppose the site-wide enforcement of union-endorsed enterprise bargaining agreements, but



DAVID GERAG

Chris Mazzotta of labour hire company Troubleshooters Available in Melbourne yesterday

because of their exposure to damages for late delivery, they have tended to put up with it, with the exception of Grocon, which is suing the CFMEU for \$10.5m over blockades of four of its sites in 2012.

Mr Mazzotta said the unions had wanted to infiltrate Grocon by hand-picking shop stewards "but Daniel Grollo, to his credit, said 'No, that's not going to happen'.

"I applaud Grocon for taking the stance they have taken over the last several months. It's good to see that from first-tier builders. In the past that would never have happened."

Troubleshooters has been a frequent target of union activity and Mr Mazzotta said CFMEU organisers had actively persuaded builders to engage only union-endorsed labour hire companies.

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