30 March 2026

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP,
Prime Minister,
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Subject: Escalating cost pressures and supply risks in the electrical and construction sectors

I write on behalf of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), representing 75,000 skilled electrical trades workers across our country. The economic consequences of the Iran conflict are now materially impacting electricians, especially apprentices, and workers more generally in the construction sector. Already, we have hundreds of apprentices who have been stood down from work and now face an uncertain future. Taken in total, these pressures pose a direct risk to the Government's core priorities under Powering Australia, the National Housing Accord, and Future Made in Australia.

The construction sector is critical to the livelihoods of more than 1.3 million workers, including tens of thousands of ETU members. It is also crucial to the delivery of the Commonwealth's housing agenda, including the National Housing Accord, and its infrastructure and manufacturing agenda, most obviously with Future Made in Australia. And especially in the context of electricians, it is fundamental to building the energy infrastructure of tomorrow which our country so desperately needs.

Global conditions are shifting rapidly and are driving sustained volatility across materials, pricing, and project delivery. Escalating tensions involving Iran are placing measurable pressure on global energy and freight markets. Disruptions to oil supply and constraints across shipping routes are increasing fuel costs and contributing to broader supply chain instability. These pressures are now flowing directly into the Australian construction sector.

The Union expects industry to increase prices by 30% in April. This increase, we are advised, is solely due to fuel costs and supply chain disruption. Some businesses are already reporting that they are simply unable to source electrical conduit. And many electricians spend hours on the road each day driving from call-out to call-out. These cost escalations are being transferred through contracting chains, with many subcontractors being left exposed to shocks beyond their control and unable to properly recover cost increases.

Apprentices are disproportionately feeling these impacts, as they are among the first to be laid off in an economic downturn and are also the most economically vulnerable workers on construction sites. Even before the latest fuel price rises, ETU apprentice members reported struggles with paying for fuel to get to and from work, with many apprentices considering – or actually – dropping out of the trade due to an inability to pay for their travel to get to work. As noted above, hundreds have already been stood down with not just their livelihoods – but their future careers – thrown into complete chaos.

The human impact is already severe but added in must be consideration for Australia's long-term prosperity. We were already in a workforce crisis with labour shortages, already a key impediment to increasing the pace of the energy transition. In 2023, Jobs and Skills Australia forecast that Australia would need an additional 42,500 electricians by 2030, and over 100,000 extra by 2050. But every year since this report electrical apprenticeship commencements have fallen. This current emergency risks blowing out this shortfall even further.

The ETU and its members are strong supporters of the governments' energy, housing, infrastructure and manufacturing agenda – and are seeking coordinated and calibrated policy responses to ensure that they can continue working to deliver this agenda through the current crisis.

We also call on the government to work with industry to deliver targeted support for apprentices.

The ETU welcomes the strong engagement to dates by Ministers Rishworth and Giles, and the Department of Workplace Relations (DEWR) regarding strategies to address the current crisis and its immediate impacts. We welcome Minister Rishworth prioritising the issue at tomorrow's National Construction Industry Forum (NCIF).

We request that the government continue convening unions and employers to work on industry-led solutions and investigate what steps can be taken to keep construction sites open and workers, especially apprentices, in employment. Together, employers, unions, and government can identify current and future pressures in the industry that represent a direct and immediate risk to the delivery of the Commonwealth's core agendas of Powering Australia, housing Australian, and building a Future Made in Australia.

The ETU stands ready to work with government's and employers to ensure that effective operation of the construction industry during and beyond the current crisis. And ensure that Australia emerges from this current crisis with its economy and industry intact.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further at your convenience. Should you require further information or to arrange a meeting, please contact s 22 , National Policy Director, s 22 @etuaustralia.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

s 22

Michael Wright
National Secretary
Electrical Trades Union of Australia

s 22

Subject:	BHP Pilbara Bargaining update with ETU delegates [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Location:	s 22
Start:	Wed 13/05/2026 10:30 AM
End:	Wed 13/05/2026 11:00 AM
Show Time As:	Tentative
Recurrence:	(none)
Meeting Status:	Accepted
Organizer:	s 22
Required Attendees:	s 22

s 22

From: Michael Wright s 22
Sent: Monday, 30 March 2026 3:16 PM
To: s 22 <s 22 @pm.gov.au>
Subject: Correspondence re construction sector

Dear s 22 ,

With reference to the above, please find attached:

1. correspondence to the Prime Minister of even date.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Wright
Secretary
Electrical Trades Union of Australia

4 May 2026

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Member for Grayndler
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: anthony.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au
Cc: s 22 @pm.gov.au

Dear Prime Minister,

We write on behalf of the Australian Workers' Union, the Mining and Energy Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and the Electrical Trades Union. Our unions represent over 200 workers at the Liberty Bell Bay manganese smelter. We also have a strong and longstanding presence in the smelter's supply chains and in the surrounding communities of the Tamar River and Northern Tasmania.

We are grateful to the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments, who extended a $3 million lifeline to cover wages during Liberty Bell Bay's ongoing administration. This prevented the retrenchment of the Liberty Bell Bay workforce, maintained the prospects of a sale as a going concern, and significantly boosted morale on site and in the George Town community. It also provided the impetus for ASIC to withdraw a parallel wind down application - removing one significant pressure point on workers and site operations.

However, as you may be aware, this $3 million lifeline is intended as an emergency stopgap to prevent the imminent retrenchment of the workforce. These funds can only go so far, and as it stands will only fund workers' wages until 19 May - by which point administrators will be forced to initiate redundancies under Australian law.

The undersigned unions call on both governments not to allow this to eventuate, and to commit to supporting the Liberty Bell Bay workforce until a sale to a reputable buyer can be finalised.

There are many important reasons why the Commonwealth must seek to play such a role, rather than risking the smelter's slide into liquidation. Indeed, the challenge of ensuring a future for the smelter should pale against the multitude of good reasons for its continued existence:

1. The facility is a lynchpin local employer. Despite its challenges, Liberty Bell Bay continues to provide hundreds of largely high-quality, well-paid jobs. It does so in a region and state where average earnings trend well below the national average, and unemployment trends higher. The history of Australian industry tells us that once a capacity is lost, it is invariably lost forever, with local workers and economies foremost in bearing the brunt.
2. The site's economic fundamentals appear stronger than its current predicament implies. While dumping of Indian-produced manganese products has disrupted prices and markets, and must be addressed, Bell Bay's production costs are competitive by global standards. Interest in its purchase by up to ten prospective buyers suggests real potential for a viable future - though only if workers and capital remain in place.
3. Closure of Australia's only manganese smelter would diminish our sovereign capability - and at a time of historic disruption to supply chains and the wider geopolitical order. Manganese is a key input to the production of steel, as well as many aluminium and other metal products. An Australia that could no longer produce the mineral would have gambled its ability to procure basic metal products on an ever more volatile external environment.
4. Liberty Bell Bay is a leading example of large-scale green industry. The facility already relies heavily on hydroelectricity, offering it a considerably simpler decarbonisation journey than most Australian smelters and heavy industry sites.

A failure to act will carry a cost to government – potentially a large one. This would likely accrue in the form of workers' termination entitlements and site decommissioning costs, passed to the taxpayer if and when a liquidated facility could not meet them.

We understand that, under current arrangements, the administrator has the capacity to fund workers' wages until 19 May. We therefore ask to meet with you to discuss the smelter's future at Parliament House, Canberra during the sitting week of 11 May. You will have the opportunity to hear directly from members at Liberty Bell Bay about their current situation.

s 22 , National Organiser, Australian Workers' Union, s 22 @nat.awu.net.au and s 22 , can arrange for a meeting on our behalf.

Workers, Tasmania and the country are better off if manganese production in Bell Bay continues. We look forward to exploring how we can protect this future with you.

Sincerely,

s 22

s 22

Chris Donovan
ASSISTANT NATIONAL SECRETARY
THE AUSTRALIAN WORKERS' UNION

Grahame Kelly
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
MINING AND ENERGY UNION

s 22

s 22

Steve Murphy
NATIONAL SECRETARY
THE AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURING WORKERS' UNION

Michael Wright
NATIONAL SECRETARY
THE ELECTRICAL TRADES UNION

From: s 22 <s 22 @nat.awu.net.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 5 May 2026 12:59 PM
To: anthony.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au
Cc: s 22 @pm.gov.au>
Subject: Worker Delegation - Liberty Bell Bay Joint Union Caucus - Meeting Request 11-13 May

Dear Prime Minister,

Please find attached correspondence from AWU Assistant National Secretary Chris Donovan, MEU National President Grahame Kelly, AMWU National Secretary Steve Murphy and ETU National Secretary Michael Wright.

We are bringing AWU, MEU, and ETU members to Canberra next week and would appreciate the opportunity for the Prime Minister to meet with them to discuss Liberty Bell Bay.

Kind regards,

s 22

National Organiser
The Australian Workers' Union National Office
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AUSTRALIAN WORKERS' UNION
Stronger Together

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