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**Security of Payments – Secure by name but not by nature**

Given the Minister for Commerce, John Quigley, has described the construction industry as *‘a vital part of our economy, providing the jobs, housing and critical infrastructure to meet the needs of all Western Australians….and hosting the largest number of small businesses in the State, with hundreds of thousands of people earning a living through the building and construction industry’* it’s disappointing to see the State Government treating members of this industry with contempt via its amendments to the Building and Construction Industry (Security of Payment) Bill 2020.

Originally, an election promise to ‘even the playing field’ between builders, primary contractors and subcontractors, the Project Bank trials were available only to contractors working on government contracts.

This time, the new retention trust account system is not available to subcontractors working on residential projects.

Western Australia is now moving towards a massive home building phase following the COVID-19 shutdowns, so the time is right to get these payment protection systems in place to protect all subcontractors, not a selected few.

Master Painters and Decorators Australia (MP&DA) has joined with ReBuild Australia in calling for the Government to go further with its Security of Payment Bill to really even the playing field and save subcontractors and their families the financial hardships they have been dealing with for many years.

The Government is right to move quickly to get better payment systems up and running, and to clamp down on ‘phoenixing’ by unscrupulous operators, but the current legislation is inadequate and will fail to streamline the payment process.

Unless this is addressed, we will continue to see tragic stories of builders going broke, subcontractors not getting paid and home-owners being left with unfinished homes.

We have a window of opportunity to make the important changes now, at a time and in such a way that they will really make a difference. MP&DA is working collaboratively with industry to keep these issues at the forefront of Government discussions.

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