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Watt Faces Backlash Over CFMEU Inquiry Criticism

August 9, 2025

– Categories: *Politics & Government*



Senator Murray Watt, a Queensland Labor politician, has faced criticism for challenging the appointment of Stuart Wood AM KC to lead a commission of inquiry into alleged wrongdoing by the CFMEU, with detractors arguing his remarks undermine efforts to address union misconduct.

Queensland Labor Senator Murray Watt has come under fire for his criticism of the appointment of Stuart Wood AM KC as commissioner of a 12-month inquiry into the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining, and Energy Union (CFMEU), launched on August 1, 2025. The inquiry, led by the Crisafulli government, probes allegations of systemic violence, intimidation, and organized crime links within the CFMEU's Queensland branch. According to The Courier Mail's Des Houghton, Watt's objections to Wood's appointment,

citing potential bias due to Wood's past Liberal Party membership, have sparked accusations that Labor is deflecting from the union's troubling conduct.

The CFMEU inquiry follows a damning report by barrister Geoffrey Watson SC, commissioned by CFMEU administrator Mark Irving KC, which exposed a culture of "thuggery" and intimidation, including threats against women and children, as reported by ABC News. Wood, an industrial relations lawyer with over 30 years of experience, was appointed to lead the inquiry with powers to compel witnesses and documents, as outlined in Queensland government statements. Deputy Premier Jarrod Bleijie defended Wood's appointment, stating to *The Queenslander* that Wood's qualifications make him ideal for the role, dismissing concerns about impartiality as baseless.

Watt's critique, reported by *The Courier Mail*, suggested that Wood's Liberal Party ties could compromise the inquiry's fairness. However, critics argue this stance reflects Labor's reluctance to confront the CFMEU's alleged misconduct, which includes financial irregularities like a \$272,946 "unexplained variance" in the union's accounts, per a KordaMentha audit cited by *Yahoo News*. Industry leaders, such as Queensland Major Contractors Association's Andrew Chapman, have called the inquiry a "seminal moment" for addressing productivity losses, as noted by ABC News.