

Further strikes against Patrick

Australian Financial Review, Australia, General News, Lucille Keen 19 Jan 2016
Page 9 • 662 words • Photo: Yes • Type: News ItemClassification: • Size: 301.00 cm² • National • Australia • None • ID: 527619833

The maritime union has increased pressure on stevedore Patrick, announcing further strikes next week.

On Monday, Patrick employees nationally walked off the job for 24 hours, forcing the company to divert ships to other competing stevedores and change shipping schedules.

It was the first national stoppage since the 1998 waterfront dispute and is estimated to have cost the company millions of dollars.

In another blow to the stevedore company, which is looking at selling its operations, the Maritime Union of Australia announced more strikes are planned for next Monday and Tuesday.

However, the industrial action will be confined to Port Botany, where staff are seeking to be paid a 35-hour working week for working 32 hours, and penalty rates on weekends, which is up to 3/2 times the current rate of pay. The log of claims is expected to cost the company a further 53 per cent in labour costs.

The union did not respond to requests for comment Patrick executive Alex Badenoch said the company was happy to continue conciliation talks and if necessary would engage in an arbitrated outcome.

"The very disproportionate claims out of Botany are just not sustainable for the organisation," she said.

"Sadly we do believe this extreme behaviour is part of a broader agenda of the MUA and is more about the MUA agenda than employees."

Ms Badenoch said there was "no particular plan" to reduce the number of staff at Patrick's operations. Employment Minister Michaelia Cash said there should only be industrial action as a last resort and it should never be used

to promote unrealistic claims which run contrary to the longterm interests of employees.

"Freight, rail and port logistics play a crucial role in ensuring Australia remains productive and competitive in an increasingly globalised economy," Ms Cash said.

"Actions that compromise productivity and put our international reputation at risk do nothing to serve the national interest"

The dispute comes after months of enterprise bargaining negotiations.

Patrick, whose parent company is Asciano, is estimated to handle 44 per cent of Australia's imports. The total cost of the industrial action will not be known for weeks.

Ports Australia chief executive David Anderson said the union's actions were "completely unwarranted and destructive to the national economy".

He said a few within the union at Port Botany were introducing new demands for conditions that were unrealistic and

encroached on the prerogatives of management "The propensity on the part of the MUA to bring our whole container port

community to a halt and to cause damage and disruption to leverage over the top enterprise agreement outcomes illustrates a

self-centred lack of concern about Australian jobs and industries," Mr Anderson said.

"The claims on the part of the MUA endeavour to turn back the clock to the time when so much destruction was caused to

our international trade by unwarranted and irresponsible industrial action. It's hard to believe this is not some sort of pay-back

for the decision by Asciano's port operator, Patrick to introduce further automation at Port Botany."

The action comes at a time when the MUA is in talks with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union over a

potential merger to form a super union.

On Monday, hundreds of MUA and CFMEU members protested outside Ms Cash's office over the way in which aluminium

manufacturer Alcoa, who last week ended a bitter two month dispute with the union, escorting

protesters off a cargo ship in the

middle of the night The five workers, members of the Maritime Union of Australia, were preventing the ship from setting sail

from Portland to Singapore where it was being taken over by new owners.

The MV Portland has been stranded in Portland since November 14, 2015, despite orders from the Fair Work Commission

on November 17 and 21 for the industrial action to stop, and despite orders from the Federal Court on December 8 restraining

four of the crew members from engaging in industrial action.

Caption Text:

Patrick stoppage, PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

, [Full text: 662 word\(s\), ~2 mins](#)

Audience

57,243