

RANK-AND-FILE NEWS: FIGHTING ADMINISTRATION

A bulletin of Defend the Unions - Defend the CFMEU's Rank-and-File Committee

Safety Suffers Under Administration

Since the forced administration of our union, three Australian construction workers have died, another may lose a leg, and safety provisions have been rolled back in Queensland.

On 11 November, CFMEU member Jess Patience died working on the Vestas Golden Plains development. CFMEU National Secretary, Zach Smith, has said that Vestas often blocked the unions' access to the site and ignored health and safety concerns, despite WorkSafe Victoria issuing 22 compliance notices since March 2023.

Sources say that when the CFMEU arrived onsite post-incident, workers were still on the tools. They were not led from the scene and offered counselling, but were immediately drug and alcohol tested – presumably so the company can blame workers, rather than its own procedures. On top of this, Jess' body was left exposed while personnel milled around and police conducted interviews from the boot of their car.

Twelve days after Jess was killed, a Queensland worker died from injuries received on a Le Bain site 2 days before and, only 3 days after that, another worker was killed on a Queensland Vestas site. On 3rd December a worker was run over by a ute in Brisbane job and may lose his leg. It is clear that bosses are trying to cut corners on safety with the CFMEU in administration.

The new LNP government in Queensland is also on the offensive. Since taking office, they have suspended BPIC, which provided heat and rain policies on government jobs, removed changes to the WHS Act that would have allowed HSRs to take photos of hazards, and changed the law to require that union organisers give 24 hours notice to check safety complaints. These changes mean more workers will die. Just a year ago Daniel Talolua Sa'u died from heat stress after working on the Cross River Rail.

How many more deaths will we see as the major champion for OHS, the CFMEU, is legally blocked from responding due to the administration of our union by the Albanese government? The CFMEU has been instrumental in improving OHS on site. We never allow the bosses to get away with lax responses to OHS issues. This is one of the reasons why we are under attack on trumped up charges of corruption and intimidation.



DUDC Public Meeting a Success

Defend the Unions - Defend the CFMEU (DUDC) hosted a successful public meeting in Coburg on 5 December which brought together rank-and-file members and supporters of the CFMEU. The well-attended meeting was addressed by former National President of the CFMEU Construction & General Division, Jade Ingham; lawyer David Water and former UUU organiser, Senator Fatima Payman. Under the banner of "Why We Stand With The CFMEU" the speakers reflected on the forced administration of the union, and that this attack on a proudly militant trade union is an attack on the entire working class.

David Water described the administration legislation as "15 pages with horrendous powers"; Senator Payman shared the sense of betrayal many unionists feel following the actions of the ALP; and Jade Ingham spoke about the necessity for a multi-pronged strategy- including legal, political, industrial and media campaigns - particularly focusing on the High Court challenge being spearheaded by the Your Union, Your Choice campaign.

At the end of the meeting, a motion to hold a speak-out the following week in support of CFMEU organiser, Esther Van Arend was passed unanimously. This call to action highlights the pressing issues facing the CFMEU, and the necessity for all members and



supporters of the CFMEU to work together to fight back against the administration.

Speak out for Esther!

CFMEU organiser Esther Van Arend was sacked by administrator Mark Irving without warning, right of reply or anything resembling due process. It is alleged that a “menacing” “altercation” between Esther and Nick McKenzie (the journalist behind the *Building Bad* series that propelled the government to put the CFMEU under administration) occurred at a cinema in late November. Esther maintains she

did not use abusive language or make any personal comments about the journalist.

Irving did not investigate, and the much loved organiser was sacked without an opportunity to tell her side of the story. A protest of approximately 150 workers was held outside the (Un)Fair Work Commission in support of Esther last Friday (13/12) demanding her reinstatement. Casey Nguyen, a CFMEU delegate shared how Esther had acted as a mentor to her and countless other women as they entered the construction industry and joined the CFMEU, and former CFMMEU National

Secretary Christy Cain declared that the protest was “just the beginning” of the campaign.

The sacking of Esther goes to the heart of what’s wrong with the administration - one man being empowered to act as dictator. The administration must be opposed by members - on the streets and on the job.



Employee	Earnings
AF	4,166.16
AC	24,710.77
AC	378.23
CW	13,003.39
CD	14,984.32
HM	14,044.91
MI	49,568.70
MF	25,451.82
MM	20,672.30
SH	2,555.63
TD	2,678.29
Total	172,214.52

ALP Hacks Getting Rich off our Fees

Financial data leaked from inside the CFMEU to DUDC has revealed the exorbitant salaries being paid to some of the staff appointed by the union’s administrator in Victoria.

The figures shown in the above picture are for just over a month of staffing costs, from when the union was put under administration on 23 August until the end of September. During that time, more than \$170,000 was spent on the salaries of just eleven members of the administration’s staff, with more than \$164,000 of that going to just seven people.

The union’s government-appointed administrator Mark Irving is known to be receiving a total salary package of \$643,640 a year. Calculated based on that figure, the \$49,568.70 he is shown to have received in

the leaked financial report represents just four weeks on the job.

Assuming other figures shown represent the same timeframe (most of the staff weren’t appointed immediately upon the announcement of the administration of 23 August), the annual salaries of other members of the administration team would be as follows:

- AC: Alison Currie (Chief of Staff to Mark Irving. Former PwC partner and advisor to Bill Shorten) - estimated annual salary \$321,240
- MF: Michael Flynn (Deputy Chief of Staff. Former ‘Head of Special Projects’ at the ACTU and close ally of Sally McManus) - estimated annual salary \$330,873.66
- MM: Michael McIver (National lawyer for the administrator) - estimated annual salary \$268,739.90
- CD: Clancy Dobbyn (Former communications manager at the CFMEU and member of the socialist left faction of the Labor Party) - estimated annual salary \$194,796.16

Salaries like this are far above what even the most highly paid CFMEU members receive, and they are being paid for by union members’ dues. It would be one thing if we had a say over what is happening to our union. But this administration is not accountable to us; it answers to the Albanese Labor Government. A completely unaccountable bureaucracy being paid these kind of exorbitant salaries cannot be trusted to represent the interests of rank-and-file construction workers.

