

CFMEU

CONSTRUCTION

CFMEU CONSTRUCTION &
GENERAL DIVISION NATIONAL OFFICE
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30 July 2024

Dear members,

I am writing again to update you on progress to tackle the issues in front of our Union.

As I mentioned in my last message, much of the media reporting in the past two weeks has been misinformed and the commentary from anti-union actors has been opportunistic, disgraceful and targeting your wages and conditions. However, there are matters raised in the media that must be taken seriously and warrant investigation. We are addressing these issues head-on.

As you know, I committed to set up an independent investigation into these issues. Today, I can tell you I have appointed **Geoffrey Watson SC** to investigate alleged criminal wrongdoing raised in public reporting. He will report back to me as the National Secretary of the Union. Mr Watson is a former counsellor assisting at the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption and a Director of The Centre for Public Integrity. He is among the most respected barristers and investigators in the country. Mr Watson's review will inform the future actions of the Union.

We need to do more than look at the past, we also need to strengthen the union for the future. So, in addition to this investigation, I am appointing **Susan Halliday AM** and **Michael Paynter** to review the Union's governance arrangements. Ms Halliday is an independent practitioner and compliance expert. She is a former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Acting Disability Discrimination Commissioner, a ministerial appointment to the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce, and was the inaugural chair of Victoria's largest professional regulator. Mr Paynter is a governance expert who has represented employers, government agencies and other clients in the construction industry for over 40 years. This team will provide recommendations to me about actions we can take to improve the union's governance, including its policies and processes.

With Ms Halliday's expertise, in addition to her broad-based review of our governance arrangements, I have explicitly asked her to look at opportunities for us to ensure women in the Union are well represented. Sometimes tough times give you an opportunity to do important things for the future. We all back our sisters in the Union and I want to see that continue and improve.

These actions build on the work already underway, including a new National Code of Conduct for all delegates.

What the Union is going through right now is painful and difficult. But I am absolutely determined to ensure that we come out of this stronger than ever. The CFMEU protects lives in the toughest industry of all; it is a critical part of the broader union movement, which is the most important institution in Australia. We will not allow anti-unionists to use this to tear down that institution.

Our number one priority will always be improving the wages and conditions for workers in our industry. As you know, there are hundreds of EBAs currently under negotiation and this is a critical time for construction workers to have strong representation at the bargaining table. In the coming months, I commit to working day and night to make sure we stamp out any criminal conduct and address the challenges in front of us.

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The Union will come out stronger and will continue to deliver safer workplaces and better pay and conditions for all of you.

I will continue to keep you updated on developments as they happen.

In solidarity,



Zach Smith
National Secretary
CFMEU (Construction and General Division)