

MEDIA RELEASE

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Maritime Union needs to come back to reality

IF the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) is serious about a long-term sustainable future for Australian seafarers, it must drop any threats of strike action and return to the bargaining table with a realistic approach, says resource industry employer group AMMA.

"Former Labor minister and trade union leader Martin Ferguson's comments today on the MUA's reckless bargaining tactics further demonstrate that the union's approach is contrary to the long-term national wellbeing and the interests of its members," says AMMA executive director Scott Barklamb.

The Federal Court yesterday ruled against the MUA undertaking a 48-hour strike from today, due to deficiencies in the notice provided to the employer.

"This presents an opportunity for the MUA to reconsider its approach," Mr Barklamb says.

"At a time when the global competitiveness of Australian business is under intense pressure, it is irresponsible for the MUA to continue to threaten strike action, particularly when the union agreed to participate in further talks with the industry and the Fair Work Commission.

"The MUA should pay attention to Martin Ferguson's warning that its behaviour is threatening the economic prospects of its members, the industry and the state. They should instead work with employers towards making a realistic agreement that will set resource operations and seafarers up for sustained and sustainable future prosperity."

21 vessel operators have been attempting to bargain with the MUA since the start of 2013 for new enterprise agreements, covering about 2,500 seafarers who service Australia's \$170 billion offshore oil and gas industry.

After more than 12 months of negotiating, these employers are all still facing a shopping list of excessive industrial claims that would erode the viability of the maritime sector and potentially threaten the future of offshore resource projects in Australia.

"After 12 months the MUA is still yet to clarify its position and present a realistic idea of what it would take to avoid strike action and come to an agreement," Mr Barklamb says.

"By continuing to pursue its unrealistic and reckless agenda and threatening to strike, the union is unfairly damaging the global reputation of Australia's offshore industry and delaying pay rises for its members and their families."

Contrary to the MUA's misleading public statements, Mr Barklamb says the maritime employers are committed to hiring and training Australian seafarers and supporting their family lives.

"With the average salaries ranging from \$170,000-\$240,000 for working six months of each year, the offshore resource maritime sector has some of the most generous remuneration and leave arrangements in the country," Mr Barklamb says.

"Australian seafarers spend far more time at home with their families and earn multiple times that of nurses, doctors, teachers and other important occupations in our society."

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