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Lend Lease must support secure jobs in the building and construction industry, say unions

Construction giant Lend Lease must return to the bargaining table and respect the rights of workers to improve job and income security in the building industry, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said members of the Construction, Forestry Mining and Energy Union had the support of all Australian unions in their campaign for equal pay and conditions for all workers at Lend Lease, both directly employed and employed by sub-contractors.

Workers took industrial action for 48 hours on Tuesday following deadlocked bargaining over an agreement covering Lend Lease's project management and construction business.

Ms Kearney said the CFMEU was seeking equal pay and conditions for employees of sub-contractors on Lend Lease sites, including the Barangaroo project in Sydney.

She said the ACTU Executive had today endorsed a resolution calling on Lend Lease to immediately end its refusal to negotiate fairly with its workers at sites across the country.

"Unions are appalled that an iconic building firm like Lend Lease that last year made a profit of almost half-a-billion dollars is refusing to negotiate a job security clause in their enterprise agreement," Ms Kearney said.

"CFMEU members have been forced to take protected industrial action by the company's stance.

"The Fair Work Act clearly allows employment security clauses that seek to protect workers' jobs by ensuring contractors are not engaged on terms less favourable than those in an agreement."

Unions have also condemned Lend Lease for failing to provide jobs to apprentices across Australia.

Ms Kearney said the dispute highlighted why the ACTU is calling for better rights for contract workers as part of its response to the Howe Inquiry report into insecure work.

"People in casual, labour hire and contracting jobs are literally putting their lives on hold because they have no job or income security to plan for the future.

"These include workers who contribute to the huge profits generated by Lend Lease and it is a blight on such a prosperous nation as Australia that around 40 % of the workforce does not have the same rights as those in secure jobs – and some have little or none."

Ms Kearney said the Lend Lease dispute was a clear illustration of why better protections much be put in place for Australian workers in insecure work.

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