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Ark Tribe recognised with special union award for his courageous stand for workplace rights

Adelaide building worker Ark Tribe was tonight honoured for his brave stand for his rights at work with a special award from the ACTU.

Mr Tribe was given a Special Mention Award at the ACTU National Union Awards in recognition of his two-year fight for justice after he was charged for refusing to co-operate with the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

After facing a six month jail term, he was found not guilty in November.

Mr Tribe was charged for refusing to attend a compulsory interview about a stopwork meeting he attended in 2008. The site had stopped because of serious concerns about worker safety.

As a result of his determination to stand up for his rights, the ABCC has been forced to change the way it exercises its coercive powers. But Ms Kearney said this was not enough.

“Ark Tribe is the embodiment of union values,” said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

“At great personal cost, he stood up for what he believed was right for himself and his workmates.

“He never set out to be a hero, but he was prepared to go to jail in order to defend the rights of work of the 900,000 men and women who work in the Australian building and construction industry.

“Ark has the admiration and respect of every Australian union member. We owe him to continue campaigning for the abolition of the ABCC and the unjust laws it represents. These laws criminalise legitimate industrial activity and deny building workers the right to silence”

The ACTU National Union Awards are an annual event sponsored by the ACTU and ME Bank to reward the unsung heroes of the union movement.

Among this year’s winners was delegate of the year Eugene Clark, a member of the Finance Sector Union at Suncorp Bank. Best Workplace campaign went to the CFMEU Construction & General NSW Branch for saving the jobs of more than 70 construction workers on the Top Ryde City Shopping Centre project when their labour hire company struck difficulties (and subsequently went into liquidation).

“These awards acknowledge the union officials and delegates who devote their days to working for a better life,” Ms Kearney said.

“The stories of these delegates in particular are inspirational. Often they come under immense pressure from their employers for undergoing their duties as elected union representatives, advocating for workmates, negotiating pay rises, and informing colleagues of their rights.

“They are not paid for any of this. The rights of delegates need to be protected by law, and they deserve proper recognition from our community.”

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