



North West shelf workers deserve to be treated with more respect says ACTU

Workers helping build the Pluto project on the North West shelf should comply with the orders that have been issued by the Federal Court and return to work say unions.

However, it should be acknowledged the workers are working in dangerous and difficult conditions and deserve to be treated with more respect.

The court orders are not a judgment on the merits of the underlying issues and Woodside management should recognise this and withdraw changes to the workers' living arrangements without their agreement.

Comments by WA Liberal Premier Colin Barnett which have been critical of the workers are unhelpful and inflammatory.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Tim Lyons said:

"The strike was not organised by the unions and unions have told the workers at Pluto that they must comply with the orders of the Federal Court. This means returning to work.

"However Mr Barnett's call for legal action against individual employees is counterproductive.

"Industrial disputes of this kind are never solved by suing workers. Litigation might suppress a grievance but it won't solve a dispute.

"The workers are understandably angry over a unilateral decision by Woodside management to change the workers' living conditions without consultation and agreement.

"The employer has made a serious change to the conditions under which the workers were originally employed and it is no wonder people are very upset.

"It is important that the company do the right thing and withdraw threats to sue workers who face fines of up to \$22,000 or six months jail.

"Woodside management need to restore the status quo and sit down with its workforce and resolve the issue through cooperative negotiations rather than resorting to heavy-handed threats of legal action.

"The company's failure to negotiate with unions a proper collective agreement that includes a disputes procedure and a provision about the introduction of change in which the workers could have confidence is a real issue that has contributed to the dispute.

"In this regard, the dispute is a legacy of WorkChoices rather than a reflection on the Fair Work system as Mr Barnett has claimed," said Mr Lyons.

Media Contact: Amanda Nguyen ph: 0418 479 455 — Ian Wilson ph 0408 513 849