

Friday, 22 May 2026

Australian Unions welcome international right to strike ruling

Australian Unions have welcomed an important ruling from the International Court of Justice affirming the right to strike for workers worldwide.

The Court handed down a legal opinion overnight confirming that workers' right to strike is protected by the International Labour Organisation's Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention).

Employer organisations, led by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), had argued that there is no such right in international law. This includes the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) which is a member of the IOE and International Labour Organisation

The International Labour Organisation is the UN body comprised of governments, trade unions and employers that sets and oversees international labour standards. Despite recognising the international right to strike in its jurisprudence since 1952, employers refused to accept these rulings in 2012 leading to a deadlock in the organisation.

Yesterday's ruling gives a huge boost to workers all over the world. The right to strike is strongly linked to better wages and safer workplaces the world over. It has also helped to reduce economic inequality and strengthen and promote democracy.

The Court's legal opinion marks an important moment for the ILO and upholds the rules-based multi-lateral approach to setting international labour standards, including the right to strike.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"This court ruling confirms that the right to strike is protected by international law.

"This will give workers a stronger voice to bargain for better wages, safer workplaces, and fairer and more democratic societies.

"Australian Unions welcome and respect this ruling and look forward to working within the ILO to ensure the effective exercise and protection of the right to strike.

"This ruling is important both for Australian workers and workers in countries with restrictive strike regimes or where courts have rejected workers' general right to strike.

The right to strike is an essential part of workers being able to organise and win safer and fairer workplaces in Australia and across the world".

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