

Monday, 22 June 2026

Unions ramp up calls on coalmining multinational to end lockout of workers

Australian Unions are stepping up pressure on American coal producer, Peabody Energy, to end its lockout of workers at the United Wambo Washery in the Hunter Valley.

Nineteen workers remain without pay after the company imposed a two-week lockout, escalating an enterprise agreement dispute with the Mining and Energy Union that has been underway since early May.

The Wambo Washery workers had been taking protected industrial action after rejecting Peabody Energy's offer of annual wage increases of 2.5% and changes to bonus arrangements.

ACTU President, Michele O'Neil, today met with affected workers in the Hunter Valley and called on Peabody Energy to return to the bargaining table, arguing the dispute also highlights the need to reform federal lockout laws.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"Unions are calling on Peabody Energy to return to the negotiating table and finalise a fair agreement with United Wambo Washery workers.

"Locking workers out of their jobs and cutting off their income is an unfair and unreasonable escalation that will just prolong this dispute. Peabody Energy is placing unnecessary financial strain on its workers, which will ripple through families across the Hunter Valley.

"This giant American multinational is trying to drive down the pay and conditions of hardworking Australian workers whose last agreement expired over 12 months ago.

"When multinationals attempt to crush their workforce in this way, it highlights the need to change our laws to stop powerful companies from abusing their power and taking disproportionate action. Currently, workers can take limited, lawful action, but employers can escalate to a full lockout that cuts off workers' incomes entirely."

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