

CFMEU seeks to advance merger in FWC in January

Friday, November 10, 2017, 4:15pm

The CFMEU is looking for a strong turnout in the ballots of MUA and TCFU members on their proposed three-way merger and a rapid conclusion of FWC proceedings to formalise the amalgamation, as the Turnbull Government and employer groups seek to block it.

The ballots are due to close on November 23 and are expected to be declared some days after that.

Meanwhile, the Turnbull Government has legislation before the Senate that would require union mergers to be subject to a public interest test.

It is unclear whether the Government can win enough support from the Senate crossbench to pass the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2017 before the merger is approved.

Union sources said the proportion of ballots returned by TCFU members was 63.5% in the middle of this week, while just over 44% of MUA members have returned theirs.

However, these sources said more MUA members would return their ballots, with many working in swing rosters offshore or at sea.

FWC ready to deal with matter after mid-January

The CFMEU is seeking to move quickly to have the amalgamation proceed if the ballots approve it.

In its response to the union's enquiry about the availability of Vice President Adam Hatcher to hear the matter in January next year, the Commission replied that he will "deal with the matter as expeditiously as the circumstances will allow", after he returns from leave in the middle of the month.

However, AMMA and the MBA are seeking to delay the hearing, saying their counsel will not be available in the second half of January and parts of February.

Stuart Wood QC has previously appeared for the employer associations (see [Related Article](#)).

CFMEU national secretary Michael O'Connor said a strong turnout in the ballots would build the moral argument that the future of the unions should be decided by their members rather than the government.

"It's not fair, it's not democratic," he told *Workplace Express*.

MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin said that the average participation in industrial ballots run by the Australian Electoral Commission was usually less than 20%.

He said the strong participation in the merger ballots "reflects a healthy democracy and a memberships that are interested and connected in the merger process."

"The decision is clearly in the hands of the membership and all of the matters have been objectively put.

"They're aware of what's been put in the Fair Work Commission and they're having their say."

According to documents filed with the Registered Organisation Commission, the MUA had about 12,587 members mid-year, while the TCFU had about 3,159 last year.

The MUA leadership has strongly supported the merger, including at its recent national council.



MUA

@MaritimeUnionAU

MUA National Council are looking forward to this amalgamation

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8:25 AM - Oct 28, 2017

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The MUA argues in a [message](#) posted on its website it will retain autonomy but will be strengthened by uniting to form a "powerhouse union, making us capable of protecting and advancing our industrial, social and political rights and interests into the future"

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