

Commission of Inquiry into the CFMEU and Misconduct in the Construction Industry

WITNESS STATEMENT OF TRAVERS JAMEY PURVIS

I, Travers Jamey Purvis say on affirm:

Background

1. I make this statement in response to a notice issued by Stuart John Wood AM KC, the Commissioner appointed pursuant to the *Commissions of Inquiry Order (No. 2) 2025*.
2. I am an electrician by trade and have worked in the construction industry for more than 30 years. My experience includes road and rail tunnels, railway projects and sub-station works. I have held construction management positions and dealt with multiple unions over my career.
3. I commenced work on Cross River Rail (CRR) Project in April 2020. I was directly employed by UGL Pty Limited (UGL), which was part of the joint venture delivering the work. I left the CRR Project in January 2025.
4. My initial role was a construction interface and design management role within the stations and tunnels team. I worked alongside the construction manager and project director, with engineers, on constructability, construction methodologies and design.
5. By July 2023, I was Project Manager for the Southern Area of the CRR Project. Josh Sims was the corresponding Project Manager for the Northern Area. We had some separate staff and some shared resources, including a blue-collar workforce which worked in the different areas as required. At the time of the July 2023 incidents (which I deal with below), Mr Sims was on leave, and I was acting in his role as well as performing my own.
6. At about that time, I reported to Senior Project Manager David Ryder.

Northern Portal and dealings with unions

7. Our tunnel work extended between the southern and northern cut-and-cover areas. In July 2023, our blue-collar workforce was predominantly working at the northern end.
8. There were approximately 15 white-collar staff at the Northern Portal in July 2023. They included engineering, construction management and safety personnel. There were also cleaners and third-party contractors. We were operating day and night shifts.
9. The site facilities at the Northern Portal were demountable buildings in an open area with fenced gates. We shared the rail corridor access. Unlike other sites, Northern Portal did not have turnstiles and card-swipe entry. It was more exposed than the enclosed city sites.
10. Our team dealt with the following unions: the CFMEU, AMWU, AWU, CEPU and ETU.
11. In my experience working with unions across three decades, discussions with unions could become heated from time to time, but we could generally work towards a solution for the crews. That approach seemed to change over recent years: in particular, I noticed an increase in the intensity of CFMEU activity that made conflict resolution increasingly hard to achieve.

12. Safety has always been paramount to me. In my view, some CFMEU safety concerns were raised with another agenda attached to them.

The incidents in July 2023

13. On 25 July 2023, at about 1:20pm, I was in a strategy meeting with project managers and senior project personnel when we were told that a scaffolder had fallen and been very seriously injured at the Boggo Road site.
14. I went to the Northern Portal that afternoon as I wanted to speak with staff, explain what had happened, and encourage support for the injured worker. A decision was made to send the day-shift and night-shift workers home for the rest of the day.
15. The following day, being Wednesday, 26 July 2023, I arrived at the Northern Portal shortly before the 6:00am pre-start. There were more than 200 workers there wanting to work. The gates were locked, and union protestors were present, including those wearing CFMEU clothing.
16. The blue-collar workers could not enter and were unable to work. White-collar staff were able to enter through another gate, bring their cars inside and lock that gate. We continued with administrative work.
17. I saw a police vehicle arrive to site, make a U-turn without stopping, and leave. The officers did not get out. I do not know why the vehicle attended or why it left.
18. Workers returned for the night shift that Wednesday but were again turned away by the union protestors. I was told that Shane Rasmussen, Superintendent, was involved in managing the situation on site and that the CFMEU strongly opposed the night-shift workers commencing work.
19. From the information subsequently provided to me by a CFMEU organiser, I understood that this was the point at which Mr Rasmussen began to be personally singled out by the CFMEU.
20. On Thursday, 27 July 2023, the situation was as heated as it had been on Wednesday morning. Workers again attended for work but were unable to get onto site because of the actions of the protestors locking gates and otherwise preventing workers from passing through.
21. During the Thursday, objects such as rocks and other items were being thrown at our vehicles by the protestors intermittently. I was told by Mr Rasmussen that rocks that were thrown had struck Mr Rasmussen's personal car and there were a number of confrontations where protestors were shouting at Mr Rasmussen at close range and telling him they knew where he lived. It was chaotic from the Wednesday through to the Friday.
22. Management's position during these standoffs was that the site was open, and work was available. On the other hand, the union protestors were blocking workers from entering site. In practice, the workers and site management were caught in the middle.
23. On one of those days, two men who I understood were CFMEU organisers blocked the road down towards the rail area. I cannot recall their names. They were preventing us from driving down even to check matters such as the dewatering system. In my view, preventing basic maintenance checks could itself create a hazard.
24. I spoke to the two organisers and said words to the effect, "*You guys know you're on Crown land, right?*". They became quite aggressive towards me and made it clear that they could not care less about what I said.

25. At around this time, I saw people in plain clothes "scouting" the site. I suspected that they were with the CFMEU, checking whether people were going to work, but was unable to confirm this.
26. On Friday, 28 July 2023, I went to the Milton office early in the morning.
27. At about 8:00am, I received a telephone call from Mr Rasmussen and Mr Bennett concerning the situation at Northern Portal.
28. They told me that the front of the site was again being picketed and that they had received information that there were masked men, including men wearing balaclavas, at the front gate. I was told that some of those men were armed. They were described to me as "mercenaries" who had come from Victoria.
29. They also told me that a fellow worker, Jayce Emmerton, had said that some of the picketers had weapons, including a firearm.
30. That information was particularly concerning to me because it was consistent with other reports I had received over the previous two days about knives, chains and threatening conduct around Northern Portal. The site was relatively exposed, there were white-collar staff working inside, and by that stage there had already been confrontations, objects thrown towards vehicles and concerns about personnel being personally targeted.
31. I arrived at Northern Portal at about 8:30am. I subsequently spoke with Mr Emmerton. I met with Mr Rasmussen and Mr Peter Bennett. Mr Rasmussen called Mr Emmerton on speaker phone in my presence in a meeting room. We were told that there were people hiding in bushes or in the crowd with weapons (including a chains, knives and a handgun), wearing balaclavas. It was a tactic to scare the work crew from turning up to work.
32. I did not personally see a firearm, knife or other weapon however, I regarded the reports as sufficiently serious that I could not disregard them.
33. I could not contact upper management at that point as this was the day of the "Safety Reset" meeting with the unions.
34. I considered the situation unstable and that there was an unacceptable risk that the situation could escalate. Based on the information conveyed to me, I made the decision myself to evacuate all staff from the Northern Portal site. I considered that I had a duty of care to my personnel and myself.
35. I did not initially tell all the staff the details of the reported danger because I did not want to alarm them while they were trying to leave.
36. Mr Rasmussen, Mr Bennett and a safety adviser, assisted in getting everyone out. All staff had left by about 9:30 or 10:00am. I was the last person to leave.
37. I drove to CPB's main office, where management and union representatives were having the safety reset meeting. I tried to contact my construction director, Anthony Zervass, to tell him I had evacuated the site, but he did not take my call because he was in the safety reset meeting.
38. I waited there for approximately five hours for him to become available.
39. After the meeting, I drove with Mr Zervass, towards the Milton office via the Northern Portal. We stopped outside the site, and I pointed out the places where I had been told the men had been hiding with weapons. He agreed with my decision to evacuate.

40. On the afternoon of 31 July 2023, I received an email from Mr Rasmussen titled "*Northern Portal Union Involvement*". A copy of that email is **Annexure TJP-1**. In the email, Mr Rasmussen set out his account of the events at Northern Portal from 26 to 28 July 2023.
41. I was made aware that the CFMEU and the ETU specifically did not want Mr Bennett and Mr Rasmussen to return to the Northern Portal following work recommencing on 31 July 2023. I knew this because the ETU organisers told me this directly.
42. Mr Rasmussen and Mr Bennett were moved to the Milton office after 28 July 2023. The purpose was to reduce tensions. I was also concerned for their welfare.
43. Whilst I recall hostility against Mr Bennett subsiding over time, the hostility towards Mr Rasmussen continued.
44. Mr Rasmussen informed me that he had continued to receive threats on site, as well as when he was riding his motorbike home. I was involved in approving or seeking approval for reimbursement of an upgrade to his home security system. My recollection is that UGL, his direct employer, paid for it.
45. I understood that threats had been made against him. I also recalled Mr Rasmussen being called out by name in connection with a later march in Brisbane and thought there had been material on Facebook. He had been threatened while riding his motorbike home and that there were concerns affecting him and his family.

Further reflections

46. Working in the construction industry during such heightened and intense times with the CFMEU felt like being in a war. It was certainly a career low for me.
47. The period I have described above was dreadful – threats, fear and intimidation have no place in the workplace. Yet it appeared there were some people associated with the CFMEU who believed that it was acceptable to engage in such conduct.
48. The workers on site, but particularly white-collar staff, bore much of the mental strain caused by the CFMEU's conduct. The CFMEU's conduct towards my colleagues, Mr Rasmussen and Mr Bennett in particular, was nothing short of appalling.
49. I was also upset that a couple of young 18, 19-year-old female graduates were exposed to such aggression on site. They were so excited to be on the project when they first joined straight out of university. Then, for them to see everything go on with the unions and how angry everyone got; it was not normal. It was a disgusting, chaotic and masculine time that was testosterone and ego driven. I hope the young girls have not been scarred from the construction industry because of this horrible experience.

I affirm that the contents of this statement are true.



 Signature of deponent

Place: Brisbane Date: 29 / 09 / 2026



 Before me (signature of witness)

EDEN JARDINE

Full name of witness (please print)

☐ Justice of the Peace (JP No. _____)

☐ Notary public

☒ Lawyer

☐ Other authorised person (specify): _____

From: Rasmussen, Shane [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 31 July 2023 2:12 PM
To: Purvis, Jamey
Subject: Northern Portal Union Involvement

Good afternoon Jamey

I would like to reiterate my concerns after last week when the CFMEU and the ETU Organisers attended the Northern Portal site on Wednesday evening 26 July, Thursday morning 27 July and Friday morning 28 July.

I would like to inform Upper Management that the Project Message released on Wednesday afternoon 26 July had serious implications to all White Collar Workers still working in the office on Wednesday night 26 July. The White Collar Office staff were not aware at this point that the Project Communication had been released as all Office Staff were in meetings and attempting to prepare for the anticipated restart the following day. The project message was received by Union Organisers and shortly after this message was released the Northern Portal was engulfed by a minimum of eight (8) CFMEU and two (2) ETU Union Organisers that exhibited abusive and very aggressive behaviour. The CFMEU Union Organisers had made repeated threats to the White Collar Staff and myself on numerous occasions and in particular stated that they were coming for me. The Union Organisers had barricaded the Northern Portal front gates and prevented vehicles leaving or entering. This conduct continued for approximately an hour to which I was able to persuade the Union Organisers to leave the Northern Portal on the premise that the Night Shift Blue Collar workers, that turned up to site, would not be working that shift. At that point in time all remaining White Collar Staff locked up all Plant and the Northern Portal Facilities and closed and locked the compound gates behind them. It was expected that the CFMEU and ETU Union Organisers would be present on site again the next morning.

On the morning of Thursday 27 July, the Northern Portal site was visited by a minimum of eight (8) CFMEU and two (2) ETU Union Organisers that barricaded the Northern Portal front gates and prevented the Dayshift Operators from entering site. The Union Organisers had left the Northern Portal main gate area by approximately 7:30am. Ben Loakes (IR) and Jayce Emmerton (AWU Union Delegate) were in attendance which I believed assisted with reducing the time the Union Organisers remained at the main gate and also due to the fact that the Dayshift Operators (AWU Members) agreed to leave site and conduct no work for that shift.

On the morning of Friday 28 July, the Northern Portal site was visited again by a minimum of eight (8) CFMEU, two (2) ETU Union Organisers and two (2) ETU Union Delegates that barricaded the Northern Portal front gates. The Union Organisers had also chained and locked the main and personal access gates to the front of the site. Ben Loakes (IR) and Jayce Emmerton (AWU Union Delegate) were again in attendance and the Union Organisers had left the Northern Portal main gate area by approximately 10:30am.

All White Collar Office Staff were only able to enter site via the rear gate which was kept locked and only opened to allow staff inside. Occasionally the CFMEU Union Organisers would loiter around the rear entrance gate. On one occasion a loud whack was heard, and I went out to investigate what had caused the alarming noise and four (4) CFMEU Union Organisers were hanging suspiciously around the rear gate entrance. The CFMEU Union Organisers are familiar with and know how I get to and from work and what my personal transport looks like. The loud whack was heard in the vicinity of where I had parked my personal vehicle, after seeing the four (4) CFMEU Union Organisers within this area and it is my belief that a large object had been thrown at my personal vehicle and I quickly relocated the vehicle so as the four (4) CFMEU Union Organisers could not see or determine the location of this vehicle.

At approximately 8:46am I contacted Jayce Emmerton (AWU Union Delegate) to obtain an update on the Union Organisers activity and if the Union Organisers had dissipated. He informed me that two (2) of the CFMEU Union Organisers with balaclava's had crept up behind him at around 6:30am and in no certain terms told him that he should leave. Jayce had also advised at this time that he had been made aware that some of the CFMEU Union Organisers had been carrying knives and firearms.

As you are aware we had a short meeting later on Friday where I informed you of the actions of the Union Organisers, the history of the previous events and my concerns for the Office Staff's and particularly my own safety.

Further to these concerns I would like the company to provide information on how the Project can manage the workplace and provide all project employees a Safe, Bullying, Harassment and Discriminatory free workplace. After the recent events and the behaviour exhibited by the Union Organisers I believe that they have contravened the following:

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) (AD Act)
- Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) (Criminal Code)
- Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work - Code of Practice 2022
- Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) (HR Act)

And the company has a duty of care to provide support and safe workplace under the following:

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) (AD Act)
- Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld) (IR Act)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) (FW Act)
- Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) (HR Act)
- Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) (Criminal Code)
- Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work - Code of Practice 2022

Regards

Shane Rasmussen

Senior Electrical Supervisor



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