

VIOLENCE IN THE QUEENSLAND CFMEU

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The Administrator of the CFMEU has directed me to investigate violence in the Queensland operations of the CFMEU.¹
2. Violence is any behaviour which is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive. It includes conduct which is threatening or coercive, or which causes a person to feel fear for their safety or well-being. It specifically includes conduct which “*causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise to be exposed to the effects of, such behaviour*”.
3. That definition of violence should not be unfamiliar to the CFMEU – the definition is one drawn up by the CFMEU to be included in its enterprise agreements.² The purpose of having such a wide definition of violence was, apparently, to protect CFMEU members from harm.
4. Yet, as will be seen, the CFMEU has breached – deliberately breached – every aspect of its own anti-violence policy. The CFMEU in Queensland actually intended to inflict physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse on others. The CFMEU used threats and coercion deliberately to cause fear. As will be seen, the CFMEU directed threats and intimidation at women and children.
5. In summary, there is no doubt that there is violence in the Queensland construction sector and there is no doubt that the CFMEU was a big part of that violence. This is hardly a revelation. In 2024 a federal judge said he did not require evidence of CFMEU violence because it was “*well documented*” that the Queensland CFMEU had “*engaged in thuggish behaviour*”.³
6. The purpose of the violence is plain – the violence is used by the CFMEU to support a pursuit of political, industrial, and financial power. This included, if necessary, destroying individuals and businesses. The CFMEU is ruthless – it will crush anyone offering any resistance to it.
7. The campaign of violence was very likely planned and directed by the CFMEU leadership – principally by the secretary, Michael Ravbar, and an assistant secretary, Jade Ingham.⁴ The campaign was eagerly executed by some CFMEU organisers,

¹ The terms of reference are attached as Appendix A. The terms were altered on 27 May 2025 to extend the period under investigation back to 2015. References in this report to the “CFMEU” should be read as limited to the Union’s Queensland operations, either through the Queensland Branch of the federally-registered CFMEU or the state-registered entity, the CFMEUQ.

² See, as just one example, clause 42.3 of the “*RB Major Projects Pty Ltd and CFMEU Collective Agreement 2023-2027*”

³ Justice Rangiah in *CPB Contractors Pty Ltd v Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union* [2024] FCA 459 at [51].

⁴ As will be explained, Ravbar and Ingham were given multiple invitations to attend an interview or to respond in writing. They declined all invitations. They were specifically requested to respond to this suggestion regarding their role in the violence. Neither did.

some delegates, and some rank-and-file members. Ravbar and Ingham successfully cultivated a culture of violence in the CFMEU.

8. This report is not motivated by any hostility toward the trade union movement - far from it. This report is generated from a genuine respect for the essential role trade unions hold in redressing the imbalance of power between labour and capital, in improving the lives of working Australians, and keeping workers safe. But the power and benefits conferred through the recognition given to a trade union carries with it responsibility and accountability, and subjects its conduct to scrutiny. The rights of organisation and protest are not unlimited; there is a line somewhere - and violence is always on the wrong side of that line.
9. The Queensland CFMEU has well and truly crossed that line. The problem of violence in Queensland is serious. Numerous instances of violence are detailed in this report.
10. The CFMEU methods have proved effective in Queensland. The CFMEU has got its way, time after time, on numerous aspects of policy and during practical negotiations. Many of the opponents of the CFMEU have stood up to the intimidation, but others have been cowed by the threats. One common CFMEU method is to target individuals, isolate them, attack them, and not let up. The CFMEU is relentless. The conduct of the CFMEU has required some of their targets to quit their jobs, to move their homes, and to seek medical assistance. The CFMEU has ruined careers and caused long lasting emotional and financial damage to its opponents.
11. Yet often the methods employed by the CFMEU are childish and cowardly - *childish* because many of the methods used are scarcely more sophisticated than schoolyard bullying; *cowardly* because the CFMEU commonly sends a dozen or more men to intimidate its targets. The CFMEU imagines that strength is best reflected in sending ten men to threaten one. That is not strength – it is thuggery. Consistent with the thuggery, the CFMEU targets the vulnerable, including women.
12. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the CFMEU. The leadership speaks of its concern for the mental health of workers, but then deliberately damages the mental health of its opponents. The leadership speaks passionately about job security, but then constantly calls for the sacking or resignation of its opponents. The leadership speaks emotionally of unity in the trade union movement, but then tries to wipe out competing unions.
13. But far and away the worst hypocrisy from the CFMEU relates to its treatment of women. The leadership speaks of its concern for women, but then viciously attacks the women who oppose it in degrading and sexist terms. A specific section of this report will focus on violence inflicted on women by officials and members of the CFMEU. One of the witnesses is a health and safety advisor with more than thirty years' experience on Queensland building sites - she said that the belief that conditions for women are

improving is wrong and, if anything, the way in which women are treated has been deteriorating.

14. Unless it is stopped the CFMEU violence in Queensland will get worse. That said, there is evidence that suggests that if changes are made the risk of violence can be reduced and may even be removed.
15. If there is to be a change it will need to be initiated by the Administration. Even though Michael Ravbar and Jade Ingham have been removed, and even though a handful of officials have resigned, there seems to be little willingness amongst the holdover officials to change. Instead, those officials I interviewed were steadfast in denying that there was any problem at all – I was told repeatedly by organisers that they had never seen any violence emanating from the CFMEU. That is laughable given the extensive court findings and the irrefutable video evidence.
16. The Administration's response needs to be swift and ensure long lasting change. To end the violence will require the immediate removal of some officials.⁵ Those officials and delegates who remain will need to be warned that repetition of the violence will lead to termination of their employment or appointment. Violence by the CFMEU can no longer be tolerated.

The course of the investigation

17. Over three months, 55 people were interviewed during the investigation, most more than once.⁶ Those interviewed included CFMEU officials and members, other trade unionists, politicians, bureaucrats, building contractors, representatives from employers' associations, bystanders and – worst of all – victims of the abuse. Speaking to the victims was especially eye-opening. Extensive video and photographic evidence has been obtained and examined. The information included contemporary press reports and social media posts made by the CFMEU. There are thousands of pages of material.
18. Yet I fear this investigation only scratched the surface of the violence in the Queensland CFMEU. There are many other potential witnesses and many other stories which could have been told. There was no chance nor need to pursue them all. Enough was uncovered to make me confident of the accuracy of the matters included in this report.
19. This investigation was conducted while the CFMEU constitutional challenge to the Administration was unresolved.⁷ The investigation was hampered to some extent by that fact. While that decision was outstanding several potential witnesses were reluctant to co-operate in case Michael Ravbar and Jade Ingham were successful and reinstated.

⁵ The names of those officials will be provided separately to the Administrator in a private report.

⁶ A list of participating witnesses has been provided to the Administrator.

⁷ At the time this report was prepared the judgment had not been handed down.

A lack of co-operation from CFMEU witnesses

20. An investigation like this requires some degree of co-operation: potential witnesses need to be willing to talk; potential witnesses need to be truthful and accurate.
21. There was an obstinate refusal to co-operate from some critical witnesses with connexions to the CFMEU. It seems, sadly, that CFMEU officials are afflicted with widespread memory loss.
22. Four groups of witnesses connected to the CFMEU were identified as especially important to the investigation.
23. The first group comprised the former secretary Michael Ravbar, and a former assistant secretary, Jade Ingham.
24. Given the High Court challenge to the validity of the administration, it was regarded as inappropriate to require Ravbar and Ingham to attend an interview under s 323L of the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*. Instead, Ravbar and Ingham were given multiple invitations to attend an interview. Neither took up the invitation.
25. This was a pity because there is no doubt that each could have assisted the investigation. It also meant that information adverse to Ravbar and Ingham was left uncontradicted.
26. A second group of current officials was identified as potentially helpful. Because this group comprised current employees of the CFMEU, they were directed by their employer to attend interviews. Independent legal representation was provided. They were [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
27. The interviews were disappointing. Several of these men were deliberately unhelpful and even gave palpably false answers. A summary of what they had to say and the reasons for the adverse assessment of it is provided in my private report to the Administrator.
28. Because of specific matters adverse to him, a further invitation to attend or to provide a written response was sent to [REDACTED]
29. A third group of witnesses comprised previous employees of the CFMEU. This group could not be directed to attend, so they were invited to attend an interview. Again, independent legal representation was provided. Each of them declined to participate in an interview. This group comprised [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a former co-ordinator, and the former organisers [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
30. [REDACTED] accepted an opportunity to provide answers to written questions. Those answers are referred to where necessary in this report.

31. Because specific matters of concern arose during the investigation, further invitations were made to [REDACTED] to attend an interview or provide written responses to address the issues. [REDACTED] gave a minimal response and [REDACTED] declined to respond altogether.
32. A fourth group of witnesses are or were CFMEU delegates – ie officials of the CFMEU, but not employees of the CFMEU. They were also given an opportunity to attend an interview or answer questions. As none were employed by the CFMEU there was no power to direct them to attend an interview or to answer questions. Again, legal representation was made available, but each declined an interview. They are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
33. Because the investigation raised specific issues of concern against them, further invitations to attend an interview or provide written responses were extended to [REDACTED] to address the matters raised. Both declined the invitation.

The reports

34. My report is in two parts: this public report and a private report which will be provided only to the Administrator.
35. This public version has been deliberately framed to prevent repercussions against those who have provided assistance. Some names and other details have been withheld. Some of the images reproduced have been cropped or altered to protect identities. The content of some social media posts that targeted victims has been suppressed – to republish them would only retraumatise the victims and possibly grant some perverse pleasure to those who posted the abuse.
36. *Warning* - some of which follows in this report will certainly be distressing to some readers. It includes violence and threats toward women and, in one instance toward a child.

B. BACKGROUND: THE CFMEU IN QUEENSLAND

The legal structure of the CFMEU

37. Although references to the CFMEU will be made throughout this report, there are actually three separate bodies relevant to this investigation.⁸
38. The first body is the federally registered organisation, which has three Divisions – the relevant one being the Construction and General Division. The second body (and the principal focus of this report) is the federally registered Queensland and Northern

⁸ Even the reference to the “CFMEU” needs to be qualified; because of amalgamations or separations, the Union has had different titles, but those make no difference to this report – throughout the Union will be referred to as the CFMEU.

Territory Branch of the C & G Division. The third body, typically referred to as the 'CFMEUQ', is registered under the *Industrial Relations Act 2016* (Qld).

39. It will generally be sufficient to refer simply to the CFMEU, using that as a means of describing the conduct of one or more of the CFMEU organisations operating in Queensland.

The leadership structure of the Queensland CFMEU

40. Before the Administration commenced the control of the Queensland Branch was vested in the Branch Committee of Management – commonly known as “the COM”. The COM is elected by members.
41. Beneath the COM, during the period relevant to the investigation, [REDACTED] a secretary, Michael Ravbar, and two assistant secretaries, Jade Ingham and Kane Lowth. No adverse information was ever received in respect of Lowth.
42. Ravbar and Ingham were removed from their position upon the commencement of the Administration. [REDACTED] Under the Administration the powers and duties of the executive have been transferred to an executive officer.
43. Beneath the executive were, roughly, 40 organisers. The organisers were allocated roles, sometimes by reference to a geographical area, sometimes by reference to a task or trade. The number and names of the organisers changed occasionally. It will only be necessary to identify a few in this report.
44. The executive and the organisers were directly employed by the CFMEU.
45. Beneath the organisers there were, roughly, 400 delegates. Delegates are supposedly selected through a democratic process – ie a vote of members on a particular site. In practice the members are more commonly presented with a single candidate. The delegates are not employed by the CFMEU; they are employed by the contractor or contractors on a particular site. Upon selection a delegate will be recognised by the CFMEU and given specific training. The number and identity of the delegates changes often, and only those of particular present interest will be mentioned in this report.
46. Together the organisers and delegates are known as “officials” of the CFMEU and have a role of representing the Union in different circumstances. They are positions of power and authority.

C. THE CYCLE OF LAWLESSNESS

47. There is a plain and consistent theme running through the operations of the CFMEU in Queensland – that theme is the CFMEU’s utter contempt for the law, its disregard for laws and rules, its refusal to be bound by ordinary norms of behaviour, and its attempt to take advantage of its acting outside the law. There is something deeply hypocritical

that, when challenging the validity of the legislation introducing the Administration, the CFMEU took their arguments to the High Court on the basis that the CFMEU was entitled to the protection of the rule of law – a protection it had repeatedly denied to those with whom it dealt.

48. In some ways the problem goes deeper than a mere disregard for the law, it seems to extend to deliberate breaches. The CFMEU wanted to have the reputation of an outlaw.

The CFMEU's attitude to industrial prosecutions



49. In August 2024 the Fair Work Commission detailed how, in the 21-year period between 2003 and 2024, there were 213 separate court proceedings brought against the CFMEU, resulting in 2,600 convictions and the imposition of \$28 million in fines. Things were getting worse, not better: in the High Court challenge the Solicitor-General cited records showing how, in the five-year period between 2019 and 2024, the CFMEU had been convicted of 1,163 breaches of industrial laws, resulting in more than \$10 million in fines.⁹
50. This is quite out of order with the experiences of other trade unions: the CFMEU had collected 55 times more convictions than its closest competitor; many large trade unions had not been prosecuted for a single breach. While it is fair to observe that the Australian Building and Construction Commission targeted the CFMEU, other unions were also subject to the ABCC, and did not have conviction rates anything like the CFMEU.
51. Some federal judges imposing punishment on the CFMEU have observed that the CFMEU has no regard for the fines and that fines have proved ineffective as a deterrent. Several judges have described the CFMEU's attitude as treating the fines as a cost of doing business.
52. I would go further – it seems more likely that breaching the laws and suffering fines was an integral part of the CFMEU business model. Its reputation as an aggressive outlaw created a fear and reticence amongst those dealing with the CFMEU. Those running the Queensland CFMEU were obviously content that the value of that outlaw reputation well exceeded the amount of the fines.¹⁰
53. Those statistics apply to the whole of the CFMEU; this investigation is focussed on Queensland Branch. For that reason literally dozens of Queensland court decisions were read as part of this investigation – there is something of a summary below. Reading judgment after judgment is dispiriting: the lawlessness in Queensland affects every aspect of the CFMEU's operations - its relations with government, its relations

⁹ See *Ravbar v Commonwealth of Australia* [2024] HCATrans 90 (10 December 2024).

¹⁰ In his evidence in the Trades Union Royal Commission, Michael Ravbar said that "*I don't have a problem*" with the CFMEU breaching court orders, including an injunction: Michael Ravbar, 6/8/14, T: 347.25-39. Referenced Heydon Report, Volume 5, page 400.

with regulators, its relations with other trade unions, its relations with contractors, its relations with women, and its relations with the public.¹¹

Who paid the fines?

54. Unless a punishment stings it will not deter. For this reason, there is a statutory power to make an individual liable to pay the fine and to prevent recovery from the CFMEU or some third party.¹² Unless personal payment orders were made, the CFMEU routinely paid the fines imposed upon its officials. That meant the individual official faced no downside; the individual develops the confidence and impudence to continue breaching the law.
55. Several personal payment orders have been made against Queensland CFMEU officials by federal judges.
56. There were strong rumours that the CFMEU protects its officials and members from the impact of personal payment orders. An examination of CFMEU records was conducted which showed payments were being made which had the effect of defeating the sting of the personal payment orders. It seems the CFMEU may have received legal advice that third-party payments would be acceptable if made by the State registered union. That advice appears to have glossed over the complex financial relations between the Queensland Branch and the Queensland Union.
57. When individual officials were asked about the matter, objections were taken invoking the privilege against self-incrimination. Those who claimed the privilege were 

58. The only reasonable inference is that those claiming the privilege had not complied with personal payment orders made against them. There is no doubt that they and others were being funded in a way to evade the orders of the courts.
59. The step of consciously evading court orders is serious, and a further demonstration of the utter disregard the CFMEU has for the rule of law. It also explains why officials were repeatedly breaching the law.

D. INSTANCES OF VIOLENCE

60. The violence the CFMEU brings into the construction sector occurs in a wide variety of ways – in far too many ways to catalogue the lot. There is chaos – the CFMEU thrives on chaos. This makes it difficult to organise the violence into some kind of sensible order.

¹¹ These statistics grossly understate the actual number of breaches. One witness – in a very good position to know – explained that on the Cross River Rail Project there were thousands of individual breaches notified by contractors to the ABCC, but the ABCC were selective as to those which would be prosecuted.

¹² See s 546 of the Fair Work Act 2009.

61. Although there are many other types and occasions of violence, this report is limited to five categories or areas in which the CFMEU deliberately extended its violence.
62. The *first* is the approach the CFMEU took toward the government - the Ministry and the senior bureaucracy. It seems that the CFMEU thought it was, or at least should be, running the Queensland government.
63. The *second* is the way the CFMEU treated the Work Health and Safety inspectorate – another area in which the CFMEU decided it should be in control.
64. The *third* is in its relations with the Australian Workers' Union – an Australian trade union which the CFMEU in Queensland seems to have decided should no longer exist.
65. The *fourth* is the relations the CFMEU had with employers and with employer organisations. Here it is perfectly understandable that there would be tensions, but the CFMEU recognised no boundaries and went much too far.
66. The *fifth* is the way in which the CFMEU treated women. This issue has been left until last because in some ways it is the most important. It is a showcase of what is wrong with the CFMEU.
67. As foreshadowed, much of what follows involves abusive language. It might be said that these are only words, but that ignores the real effect the words had. The CFMEU knew by 2014 of the power and effect of abusive language, and why it was unacceptable. In *CFMEU v BHP Coal Pty Ltd*¹³ a mine worker's employment was terminated because he was carrying a sign bearing the words "*No principles, SCABS, No guts*". The CFMEU litigated the matter all the way to the High Court, where the termination was upheld because the language was offensive, abusive, humiliating, harassing, and intimidatory.
68. It is stunning to compare those words – "*No principles, SCABS, No guts*" - with the horrifying abuse about to be disclosed below.

HOSTILITY TOWARD GOVERNMENT

69. Australian politics, especially at a State level, is notoriously robust; strong criticism is common. But even by those standards the CFMEU went too far.
70. The problem starts with Michael Ravbar. He, like all Australians, enjoys a freedom of political communication, but that does not entitle him or anyone to engage in persistent, threatening abuse. His language set a low standard of conduct for the whole of the Queensland CFMEU. If the CFMEU was sliding into violence, the slide was starting from the top.

¹³ [2014] HCA 41.

“Politically moronic”

71. In speech after speech, Ravbar denigrated politicians because they would not give in to him. The attacks were personal, lifted straight from the Trump playbook. Ravbar described the Prime Minister as *“gutless”, “willingly ignorant”, and “politically moronic”*. He said that the Prime Minister had *“lost control”*, had a *“glass jaw”*, was a *“bed wetter”*, and had *“panicked and soiled himself”*. In one memorable speech he shouted that the Prime Minister was *“doing a shit job”* four times in about two minutes.¹⁴
72. Ravbar also attacked a succession of Queensland Ministers. He described successive Premiers as *“increasingly remote and intolerant of criticism”*, as demonstrating *“an appalling lack of judgement”*, and as being *“a joke of a leader”*. He described a Deputy Premier as a *“dud”* and another Minister as the *“worst industrial relations minister Queensland has ever seen”*.¹⁵ Meanwhile the CFMEU Facebook page told a Minister you have *“blood on your hands”*.¹⁶ Ravbar’s standard response when faced with the slightest opposition was to call for Premiers, Deputy Premiers and Ministers to be sacked or to resign.
73. I spoke to politicians about this. Their stories were similar.
74. One Minister described the CFMEU as *“the most aggressive”* trade union, and *“so aggressive so that nothing can satisfy its appetite”*. Another said *“the CFMEU is uncomfortable if there isn’t a battle or a fight on”*. One politician asked a very good question – *“the CFMEU is so aggressive, but the AWU is not. Both are building unions – why the difference?”*.
75. On public occasions – even formal occasions – the CFMEU would have members attend and heckle politicians. When one Minister was addressing a group, they were drowned out by CFMEU members - *“you’ve got blood on your hands”*. One Minister’s office received so many abusive telephone calls that – ironically - as a workplace safety issue the staff were instructed not to take calls from the CFMEU. That Minister was constantly abused by Ravbar; his abuse was described as *“relentless”*.
76. The abuse was so bad that the Queensland police insisted that one Minister be given a security upgrade.
77. The abuse was sexist. Occasionally signs were attached to the door of the ladies’ facilities near a female Minister’s office - *“Flush Labor Down the Toilet”*. One of these signs actually used tampons to form the words.

¹⁴ See as examples: *“Albanese shields mates, sells out workers”*, CFMEU media release, 17 July 2024; *“Queensland Union boss lashes out at Labor government over CFMEU probe”*, Brisbane Times, 17 July 2024; *“Doing a sh*t job: Ravbar takes aim at Albanese”* Courier Mail, 27 August 2024; Ministers Media Centre, 14 August 2024.

¹⁵ *“Michael Ravbar blasts Qld Labor for giving plum IR positions to senior union figures”*, The Australian, 5 July 2019; *“Minister rejects resignation calls after worker injured”*, Canberra Times, 26 July 2023; *“Ex CFMEU powerbroker savages Miles as ‘a joke’”*, The Australian, 27 August 2024

¹⁶ CFMEU Facebook post, 15 February 2024.

78. The aggression was quite mindless. For example, a Minister's electorate office was picketed, but when the Minister asked the men on the picket line what their issue was, they had no idea.

"You're now working for us"

79. The following might be the best example of how the CFMEU thought of government, especially a Labor government.
80. When Labor recovered government in Queensland in February 2015 the CFMEU seems to have regarded itself as having taken over administering industrial relations.
81. Just after the change of government, two members of an agency attended the CFMEU offices at Bowen Hills for stakeholder consultation over new industrial legislation. The new law had been a promise of the incoming government. I was told by a senior public servant that, upon arrival, they were verbally attacked by by [REDACTED]
82. According to that public servant, [REDACTED] complaint was that the CFMEU should have been involved in *drafting* the legislation, and not just consulted after the law was drafted. In other words, in [REDACTED] view the CFMEU should be making the law, not the Parliament.
83. The public servant said that [REDACTED] is a large man and he stood, towering above the consultative team. He shouted for about five minutes. The theme was consistent – *"I am your boss now"*. He told them *"You'll take your directions from me"* and added *"You're now working for us"*.
84. I wished to raise these issues with [REDACTED] but he declined my invitation to attend an interview. Instead, he gave a written response which contained no details beyond a bare denial.

"The crack was probably already in the glass... it was probably foreign product."

85. On 5 April 2023 the CFMEU organised a *"National Day of Action"* during which an estimated 5,000 of its members marched through the CBD toward the Commonwealth offices in Waterfront Place in Eagle Street.
86. The principal reason for the protest was to force the federal government to abolish the Fair Work Ombudsman – the body responsible for prosecuting the CFMEU for its many breaches.

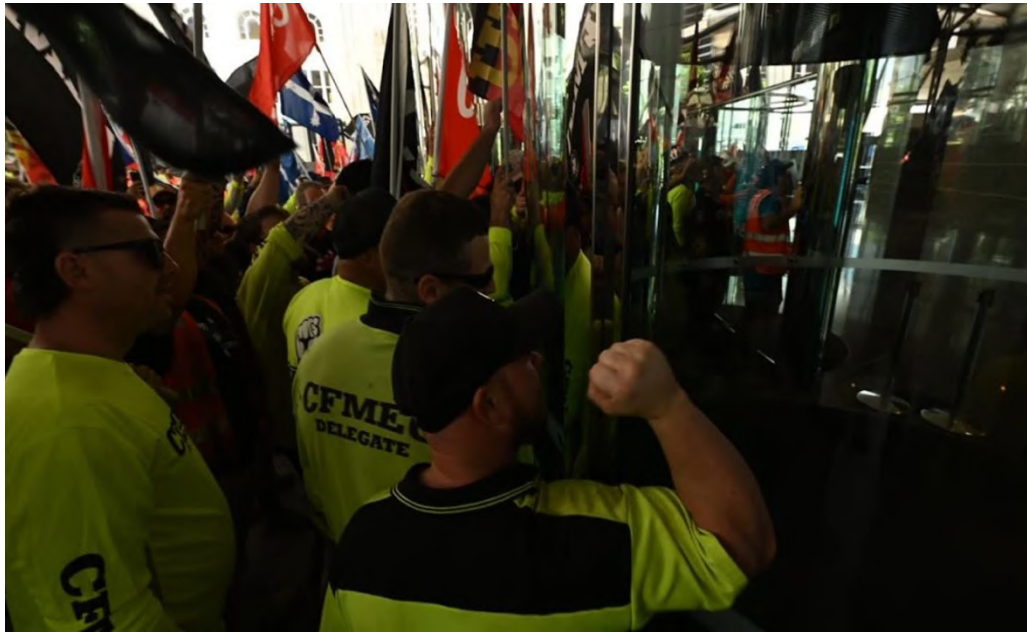


Figure 1: The protesters arrive at the Commonwealth offices (Source: Courier Mail 5/04/2023)

87. The premises at Eagle Street were locked down in advance of the protestors, but several men forced a glass revolving door, smashing it to pieces.

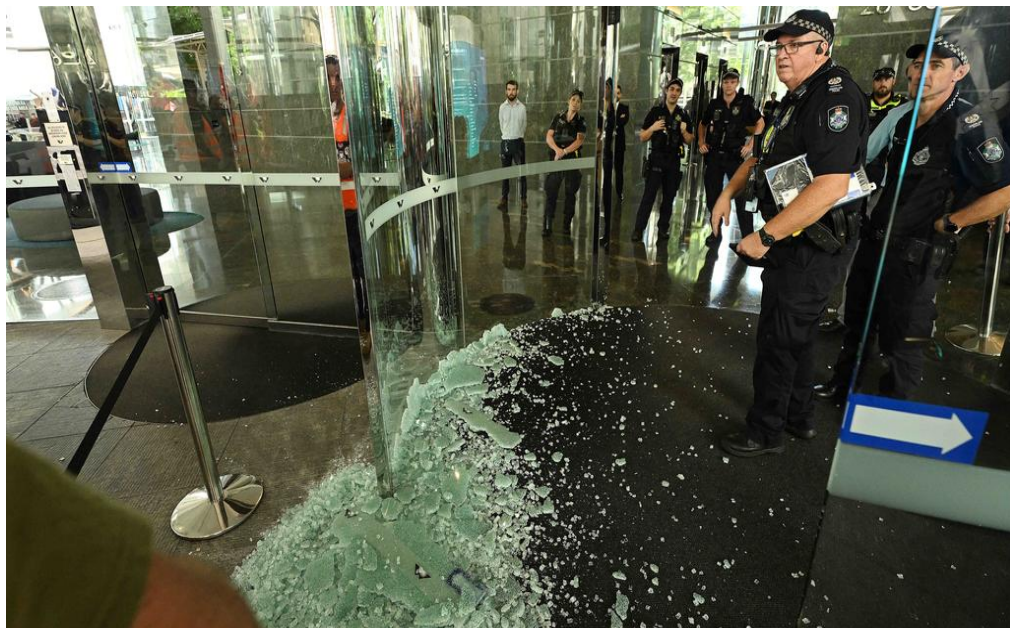


Figure 2: Police inspect the smashed glass door. (Source: Lyndon Mechielsen/Courier Mail 19/04/2023)

88. There was also graffiti found painted onto the building: for example, one message was “Fuck ABCC” and another simply said “Pigs”.¹⁷
89. Apart from the inconvenience, the cost of the damage to the property was in the order of \$25,000.

¹⁷ “Two men face court after violent CFMMEU protest” The Courier-Mail, 19 April 2023. The message regarding the ABCC is puzzling; the ABCC had already been abolished some months earlier.

90. Although there is clear video evidence that the locked door was smashed when CFMEU members were forcing it open, Jade Ingham brushed that aside: he told the mob – *“I know the crack was probably already in the glass and that it wasn’t our fault”*. He was even able to blame the destruction of the door on foreigners – *“It was probably foreign product to begin with”*.

Workers just “wanting to have a say”

91. On 23 August 2022 the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program had organised an industry briefing at the Department of Transport and Main Roads offices in Mary Street in the CBD. This was an important strategic planning event. Amongst others, three senior officials of the CFMEU were invited to attend.
92. The event never happened. Before the briefing could commence around 200 members of the CFMEU “stormed” the premises, forced their way in, and occupied the area in which the briefing was to occur. The mob knocked a security guard to the ground, although he was not seriously injured.¹⁸



Figure 3: CFMEU protesters occupying the Department of Transport and Main Roads office. (ABC 26/08/22)

93. Departmental workers and persons attending the briefing were forced to take cover. The police were called. The building was placed into lock down. The departmental staff and the visitors were evacuated.
94. The CFMEU's tactic was effective: QTRIP had to abandon the remainder of the briefing program on safety grounds.
95. The Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, labelled the CFMEU conduct as “disgraceful” and called on the CFMEU to apologise to those hurt. The CFMEU refused: Jade Ingham made a statement that trespassing on the premises was “nothing more” than construction workers “wanting to have a say”. He accepted no blame that an important

¹⁸ See “Queensland opposition calls on Labor to hand CFMEU donations to anti-bullying charity after protestors entered government building”, ABC News, 26 August 2022; and “Qld state of disunity as CFMEU flexes muscle in construction industry”, The Courier Mail, 22 July 2024.

industry briefing had to be cancelled; instead he said *“the meeting was cancelled by a government too scared to face scrutiny”*.

96. In a gesture typical of the CFMEU, Ingham called for resignations – *“Clean out your sclerotic bureaucracy, starting at the top”*.

HOSTILITY TOWARD THE WHS INSPECTORATE

97. The CFMEU had no respect for the independence of the regulators; as far as the CFMEU was concerned, if the regulators would not bend to its will, then they were corrupt or incompetent¹⁹ and could be subject to threats of violence, intimidation and targeting.
98. The CFMEU method for putting pressure on the WHS inspectors was to abuse them, to belittle them, and to whip up an angry response from the membership toward the inspectors. This last matter was commonly done through posts placed on the CFMEU Facebook page. The posts were often accompanied by doctored video images. The worst feature of this was undoubtedly deliberate – it meant the inspectors could be identified.
99. And, as will be seen, their families could be identified too (see *“Is that your old man on the video? – He’s a fucking cunt”*, below).
100. In case it appears that what follows is a biased account provided only from WHS inspectors, it might be important to know that the fact of the abusive conduct was independently corroborated. There are videos of the CFMEU captured by the inspectors. There is also independent corroboration from others who saw the exchanges on various worksites. For example, an employee of one of the contractors on the Cross River Rail Project was an independent witness to the way in which the CFMEU treated the WHS inspectors. He described how the CFMEU organisers and delegates would openly abuse the inspectors and attack them verbally if the inspectors declined to follow the CFMEU’s directions.

“Fuck off – I told you I would get you removed”

101. A theme constantly repeated by the WHS inspectors raised issues surrounding the role of a former WHS director, Helen Burgess. This is problematic because those matters are currently under investigation by the Crime and Corruption Commission.²⁰ In fairness to Burgess I decided not to review those matters in this investigation.
102. But it is necessary to raise this present matter because it demonstrates just how much power the CFMEU wielded over the WHS Inspectorate.

¹⁹ For example, in about 2021, a CFMEU organiser, [REDACTED] was disgruntled with the decision of a WHS inspector and so he told the inspector *“you’re on the take from the builder”*.

²⁰ See, for example, *“Health and safety officials under investigation for allegedly giving confidential information to CFMEU”*, ABC News, 19 August 2019.

103. In about 2021 a bomb threat was made in respect of a building site in Edmondson Street, West End. The police were called and specialist teams carried out a search for the bomb. After some hours the threat was exposed as a hoax.
104. While work on the site was stopped a CFMEU organiser, [REDACTED] attacked the safety representative of the builder. [REDACTED] began screaming at the man that he was “a fucking cunt” and “a fucking dog”.
105. A WHS inspector was standing nearby and stepped in and told [REDACTED] he was not permitted to speak to the safety representative that way, or to use that kind of language.
106. Within minutes the WHS inspector received a telephone call from his boss who ordered him to “immediately remove himself” from the site. When [REDACTED] saw the inspector preparing to leave, he called out to him “Fuck off – I told you I would get you removed”.

The inspectors’ own workplace became unsafe.

107. Things became so bad for the WHS inspectors that they had to introduce their own safe work practices to protect themselves from the CFMEU. This came in two waves.
108. The first change came in about 2018 when a direction was made that a lone inspector could not attend a site where there were multiple CFMEU officials present. In those circumstances a second inspector had to be called. From that time WHS inspectors have had to attend CFMEU sites in pairs for their own safety.
109. The second change came in 2022 when the inspectors were issued with body worn cameras as part of their PPE.²¹ This came about because the CFMEU was shooting their own videos, then editing them to show the inspectors falsely in a bad light. When these videos were published on the CFMEU Facebook page they would be accompanied by critical or even humiliating commentary, setting off a thread of unhinged responses. To counter this, the WHS inspectors began wearing cameras and collecting their own videos. Thousands of hours of those videos have been provided to me.
110. The body worn cameras produced an unexpected beneficial result: when the CFMEU officials became aware they were being recorded, their behaviour improved markedly.

“You’re that cunt from the video”

111. In about 2022, during the worst of the period of abuse caused by the CFMEU Facebook page, a WHS inspector attended a site in Brendale, just north of Brisbane. He was accompanied by two female trainee inspectors.
112. The inspector was talking to a representative of the builder on the top deck of the building under construction, when one of the workmen came at the inspector with an

²¹ PPE – ie personal protective equipment.

angle grinder. The angle grinder was in operation. The workmen shouted at the inspector, *"You're that cunt from the video"*.

113. The inspector shepherded the two trainees to safety but was followed by the man with the angle grinder. The man told the inspector *"I want to take you outside and bash the shit out of you"*.
114. This happened shortly after the CFMEU had posted an inflammatory video about that inspector on its Facebook page.

"You're a bit of a fucking dog"

115. A WHS inspector was at the funeral of his friend's wife. His friend was from the construction sector and so were several of the other mourners.
116. The inspector was approached by three men he did not know. One of the men came to him and said *"You're that cunt from the video"*. Another added *"You're a bit of a fucking dog"*.
117. Not long before the funeral, that inspector had been the subject of an inflammatory video posted by the CFMEU on its Facebook page.

"You're a fucking dog, you're a fucking dog, you're a fucking dog"

118. On 4 April 2018 a CFMEU organiser, [REDACTED], was troubled by what he felt were deficiencies in an emergency evacuation plan. When a WHS inspector demurred, [REDACTED] responded by moving in close to the inspector and screaming at him *"You're a fucking dog, you're a fucking dog, you're a fucking dog"*.
119. [REDACTED] admitted he did this.²²
120. It is true that [REDACTED] was subsequently acquitted of criminal charges arising from this episode²³, but that in no sense excuses [REDACTED] for what he did: [REDACTED] was purporting to act under an authority received from the CFMEU while wearing a CFMEU uniform. His conduct was disgraceful.
121. The response from Michael Ravbar to this incident demonstrates just how far the leadership of the CFMEU had departed from the norms of conduct in a civil society: according to a newspaper report, Ravbar called on the WHS Inspectorate to apologise to [REDACTED] and the CFMEU.²⁴

HOSTILITY TOWARD THE AWU

122. The worst violence coming from the CFMEU has been directed at the Australian Workers Union and its officials.

²² See [REDACTED]

²³ [REDACTED]

²⁴ [REDACTED]

123. The key factor driving CFMEU hostility toward the AWU is an intention to drive the AWU out of the south-east corner of Queensland – if the CFMEU had its way, the AWU would cease to function in that area or, perhaps, cease to function altogether. The CFMEU could then take control of all building sites.
124. Not only is this inconsistent with the industrial legal system, but it is also directly contrary to the objects of the CFMEU which require the CFMEU “[t]o work as far as is lawful in harmony with other labour unions.”²⁵
125. The CFMEU was driven to illegal methods because legal methods were not open to it. Under the competing coverage rules, if the CFMEU had gone through conventional legal processes they would have lost. There is a sufficiently clear dividing line between the workers covered by the AWU and the CFMEU and it showed that the CFMEU did not cover workers on many sites where it was pressing its involvement. On those occasions where the coverage issue had been litigated, the CFMEU had lost.²⁶

The commencement of the personal hostility

126. Before 2022 there had been decades of simmering political and industrial competition between the CFMEU and the AWU, but it did not cross into violence. In about 2022 something changed and the competition was converted into a hostile campaign.
127. It is possible to place a date on the spike in the violence deployed by the CFMEU against the AWU. In August 2022 Stacey Schinnerl was elected as the State Secretary of the AWU – the first woman to hold that office.
128. On 6 November 2022 Schinnerl spoke at the ALP State Conference and made a reference to the incident where the CFMEU had stormed the Department of Transport and Roads (see “*Workers just wanting to have a say*”, above). Michael Ravbar was leading the CFMEU contingent at the conference. He erupted and demanded that all CFMEU delegates to the conference immediately leave. Those delegates followed their leader.²⁷
129. From that time there has been continuous intimidation of the AWU by the CFMEU.
130. There are numerous instances of different kinds of violence inflicted by the CFMEU on members of the AWU – far too many to list all of them; these are just a few.

²⁵ See the Objects stated in Part 4 article (m) of the the most recent iteration of the rules of the CFMEU.

²⁶ One especially vivid example is in the decision of Justice Munro in *Re Australian Workers Union* (1998) 26 IR 197 at 200-201.

²⁷ Ravbar was specifically asked to respond to this, but declined. H

“You fucking sell-out cunts”

131. On 23 March 2023 there were two incidents at the Brisbane Metro site at the corner of Grey and Melbourne Streets in the city - one in the morning; the other in the afternoon. Each was serious.
132. In the morning three AWU organisers arrived near the site to attend a scheduled meeting. The meeting was approved by the contractor.
133. The CFMEU were determined to prevent the AWU from gaining access to the site. A dozen or more CFMEU members waited for the AWU organisers and blocked their access to the site. The AWU organisers were then surrounded and two were pushed and shoved and dragged by their clothing.



Figure 4: CFMEU members blocking the AWU organiser's entry.

134. Slogans were shouted – a rhythmic chant which starts “AWU” – then a pause before – “Grubs”. It looks childish on paper but is not so harmless when repeatedly shouted by an angry mob. Personal abuse was hurled – “You fucking sell-out cunts” was one memorable line.
135. This was happening on a public street and members of the public were nearby – one CFMEU man, in an agitated and aggressive manner, approached bystanders at a bus stop screaming “Do you think the AWU are grubs?” Two women near the scene became distressed and commenced crying.
136. I was told by a person that [REDACTED] a CFMEU organiser, grabbed and manhandled him. This was corroborated by a witness. [REDACTED] sent a written response adamantly denying it – but I do not see why I should believe him given this seemed to be a miraculous improvement on his memory during his interview. [REDACTED] was involved, although it is not clear whether he became physically involved.
137. The AWU organisers, with the assistance of the contractor, were able to extract themselves and escape.
138. [REDACTED] was asked about this incident and, at least at first, he had some recollection – but, as questioning became closer his memory suddenly failed him. When [REDACTED] was asked about it he, at first, said he recalled being there, but when allegations were put to him he reverted to his standard answer - “I don’t recall”.

“We’re the CFMEU – we’re here for the Blue”

139. On the afternoon of 23 March 2023 the same three AWU organisers returned to the Brisbane Metro site with a view to speaking to their members. About 25 CFMEU men

again blocked their entry. Again, the conflict was taking place out on a public street. The chants and threats were repeated at full volume.

140. The episode was captured on a video from which screenshots can be extracted.



Figure 5: The point at which the CFMEU blocked AWU access.

141. These scenes show the point on the public street where the CFMEU blocked the AWU organisers from entering the worksite. The large man in the middle is [REDACTED], a delegate of the CFMEU. [REDACTED] had formerly been [REDACTED]. The man in the yellow jacket being threatened by [REDACTED] is an AWU organiser. This was happening on a public street.
142. The screenshots do not convey the chaos and anger at the scene. The video does. The screenshots cannot capture the fact that the CFMEU members were screaming abuse at the AWU organisers. It was as though the CFMEU *wanted* to trigger a physical fight. One chant was “CFMEU – We’re here for the Blue”.²⁸
143. The AWU organisers maintained their composure and did not respond; if they had physical violence was inevitable.
144. Participants in the afternoon episode can be identified from the video: the CFMEU officials included [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
145. Some of those involved in this incident were directed to attend an interview with me. The interviews were quite unsatisfactory. I asked [REDACTED] about the incident but each claimed a defective memory prevented them from assisting.
146. Each of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] declined to attend an interview, so each was sent a written request to answer questions about the incident. Both declined.

²⁸ [REDACTED] said that “We’re the CFMEU – We’re here for the Blue” is a common CFMEU chant, but each implausibly denied that the word “Blue” might be speaking of a physical fight.

“We know you have two young sons”

147. On 20 June 2023 there was an especially threatening incident at the Gabba Station site on the CRR.
148. Two AWU organisers had come to the site to address members on the progress toward a new EBA during the workers’ lunch break.
149. The meeting should have been straightforward, but it was immediately disrupted by [REDACTED] and another CFMEU representative who were bellowing abuse and chanting *“Australia’s Weakest Union”*.
150. The meeting could not continue and the AWU organisers, together with the AWU site delegate, suspended the meeting. The AWU organisers were parked at a nearby shopping centre. As the AWU organisers then made their way to leave the site they were warned by a contractor – *“You have a crowd waiting for you”*.
151. At the front gate there were about 40 CFMEU members waiting for the AWU organisers. A contractor assisted the AWU organisers to find an escape through a side entrance, but there were about 25 CFMEU members waiting there.
152. The AWU organisers were surrounded and prevented from moving for about five minutes. Meanwhile the abuse revved up – *“What the fuck are you doing here?”*, *“You are screwing over workers”*, *“You fuckers worked on ANZAC Day”*, *“Are you scared now?”* – and more along similar lines.
153. The two AWU organisers were separated. One had his backpack ripped from his shoulders, he was pushed and shoved and encircled by angry men. Two men – one of whom has been identified as [REDACTED] – then shoulder charged the organiser, forcing him out onto the road into the path of traffic. One of the men told the organiser that he knew where he had previously worked; another said *“We won’t stop coming for you – no-one can protect you”* and another said *“We know where you live”*.²⁹
154. Then one made an especially chilling remark – *“We know you have two young sons”*.
155. The AWU organisers made their way back to the shopping centre, still surrounded by the CFMEU. The abuse continued even though they were in a public place - some of what then occurred was captured on CCTV footage taken inside the shopping centre.

²⁹ The CFMEU men did know where the AWU organiser lived. One morning when retrieving his rubbish bins, he found those bins covered with stickers disparaging the AWU. It is known that these stickers have been designed and purchased by the CFMEU (see *The sticker campaign*, below).



Figure 6: The CFMEU surround two AWU delegates in the Coles shopping centre on Stanley Street.

156. This screenshot shows a moment during which the two AWU organisers were surrounded by over ten CFMEU members. This occurred in a public area, adjacent to the opening of the shopping centre on Stanley Street. The movement of the AWU organisers was impeded for a long period.
157. Those from the CFMEU who can be identified as involved in this incident include the organisers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and the delegates [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. There are many others, who engaged in criminal conduct, who remain unidentified.
158. [REDACTED] was asked about this incident, but claimed he had a defective memory which prevented him commenting. I had intended to ask [REDACTED] but it had become apparent that he was not assisting the investigation. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] declined to attend an interview and declined to respond in writing.

“You don’t know who I run with”

159. On 25 May 2023 there was an incident when an AWU organiser attended a site to engage in negotiations with an employer over a new AWU EBA. A CFMEU organiser, [REDACTED], turned up uninvited and inserted himself into the discussions.
160. When the AWU organiser objected to [REDACTED] involvement [REDACTED] insisted they take the matter outside – “Can I have a word with this bloke?”.
161. Once outside [REDACTED] spoke aggressively to the AWU organiser:
- [REDACTED]: “We have to work collaboratively”.
- AWU: “Why – you have no coverage here”.
- [REDACTED]: “Okay. You want to be a dog”.

162. When the AWU organiser raised the coverage rules ██████ stopped him:
 ██████: *"Shut up little boy - remember what happened at Cross River Rail – we got you there"*.

This was undoubtedly a reference to matters described earlier.

163. The AWU organiser then turned to walk away, but ██████ called him back:
 ██████: *"I will see you down at my car later"*.
 ██████ then rolled up his sleeve and showed off a tattoo – the AWU organiser said he did not know what the tattoo meant:
 ██████: *"You don't even know who I run with. You better watch yourself"*.
164. ██████ denies being a member of or being associated with any members of the Bandidos or any outlaw motorcycle gang, and I accept that denial – but otherwise the aggression disclosed in this encounter is regrettably consistent with other misconduct by ██████ described in this report.

"You big fat cunt"

165. On 26 or 27 July 2023 an AWU organiser attended a site known as the Northern Portal on the CRR. The wider project was closed following an accident. The purpose of the organiser's visit was to address AWU members on the progress of the investigation into the accident.
166. To enter the site required the organiser to pass through a CFMEU picket line – which was permissible given the purpose of the visit. But when the organiser began to get out of his car he was surrounded by about ten CFMEU members, who got so close to the organiser he had to back up so that he was pinned to his car. More men joined the mob.
167. For 15 minutes the organiser had to suffer shouted personal abuse – *"You fucking grub"*, *"Fuck off – it's our site now"* and the like. The men then started chanting *"You big fat cunt – You big fat cunt - You big fat cunt"*. Meanwhile, one of the CFMEU men let the air out of one of the tyres on the organiser's car.
168. A CFMEU organiser, ██████, was present, although he stood apart, watching the abuse go on, but from across a footpath. The AWU organiser also recognised the CFMEU delegates, ██████ and ██████.
169. Jade Ingham arrived a little later and when he arrived and spoke to the AWU organiser the hostility diminished. Eventually the AWU organiser was allowed to leave, driving his car with a partly deflated tyre.
170. I spoke to ██████ about this incident but he claimed his defective memory meant he had no recall. Similarly ██████ ability to recall the events was compromised, and he was

unable to assist. Invitations extended to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to be asked about this incident were declined.

171. Although Ingham had declined to attend an interview he did briefly respond by denying any knowledge of this incident.

“Do you want to step outside with me?”

172. On 28 February 2023 at the Gabba CRR site, two AWU organisers were conducting a scheduled meeting in the smoko shed. One of the organisers was new and was introducing himself to AWU members on-site. A CFMEU delegate, [REDACTED], entered the shed, disrupted the meeting, aggressively shouting abuse about the AWU.
173. When [REDACTED] was asked to leave he responded to the new organiser – *“Do you want to step outside with me?”* – obviously a threat of violence. When his threat was ignored, [REDACTED] remained in the smoko shed, disrupting the meeting by repeatedly shouting *“AWU – Australia’s Worst Union”* and heaping childish personal abuse on the new AWU organiser.
174. When the organisers were leaving, [REDACTED] followed them to the perimeter of the site, hurling more abuse. An opportunity for [REDACTED] to speak about this incident was declined by him.

The Centenary Bridge incident

175. On 23 February 2024 there was an incident at the Centenary Bridge site at Jindalee. Two AWU organisers had been on the site with the knowledge and permission of the contractor and were leaving in their cars, one car following the other. As the first car reached the gates and was about to enter a public road more than ten CFMEU members surrounded the car, shouting at the driver and rocking the car.
176. The scene was captured by a dashcam on the second AWU car:





Figure 7: Dashcam footage of CFMEU officials surrounding an AWU car, blocking exit.

177. The identity of most of those involved remains unknown. Witnesses at the scene say that the CFMEU members were drawn from the so called “Youth Crew”.
178. The action continued for about 20 minutes before the CFMEU members dispersed when they became aware the police had been contacted.

“When I say AWU, you say grub”

179. At about 9.30am on 2 March 2023 three AWU organisers attended a scheduled meeting at the Albert Street Mall site of the CRR. Two CFMEU organisers tried to break into the meeting.
180. By the time the meeting ended there were six or seven CFMEU members, including the two organisers, waiting outside. They encircled the AWU officials in a threatening fashion, slinging threats and personal abuse. They plastered “AWU - Australia’s Worst Union” stickers onto the bodies of the AWU organisers (see “*The sticker and poster campaign*”, below). The loud and childish chant was struck up – “When I say AWU, you say grub”.
181. When the AWU organisers attempted to leave, the group blocked their path and surrounded them. Slowly the group inched forward and out onto the public street, with the abuse and chants still ringing.
182. The CFMEU group remained ringed around the AWU organisers, walking with them all the way back to the Adelaide Street offices of the AWU – a distance of several hundred metres. This was all occurring in a public space. Members of the public were pushed out of the way by the CFMEU to allow them to continue with their abuse.

The sticker and poster campaign

183. As part of its war against the AWU, the CFMEU designed and commissioned a range of stickers and posters with messages disparaging the AWU. It is, quite frankly, one of the most childish protests one could imagine.

184. Here is an example of one of their posters:



Figure 8A: CFMEU-designed poster.

185. Apart from the sheer stupidity of the campaign, there is a deep irony in some of the messaging. For example, when the poster says something about “sweetheart deals with the bosses”, it is notorious that the CFMEU has favoured contractors with whom it is close and with whom the CFMEU entered favourable arrangements. When it says the AWU has “officials who refuse to turn up” – it is an odd complaint to make when, as shown above, the CFMEU did everything it could to prevent the AWU getting on to sites and organising its members.

186. These are some other examples of CFMEU creative abilities:



Figure 8B: CFMEU-designed stickers and posters.

187. A search of CFMEU financial records shows that substantial sums were spent on these posters and stickers. It is not possible to be precise, but nearly \$40,000 of members' money was wasted on this rubbish.
188. The CFMEU went further and applied the stickers to private property.
189. For example, on 24 February 2023 two CFMEU organisers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], entered a secure carpark beneath the AWU offices and plastered stickers over the AWU vehicles. Stickers were also fixed onto the external walls of the building and the internal walls of the carpark.

190. These are some screenshots taken from CCTV footage from the carpark:

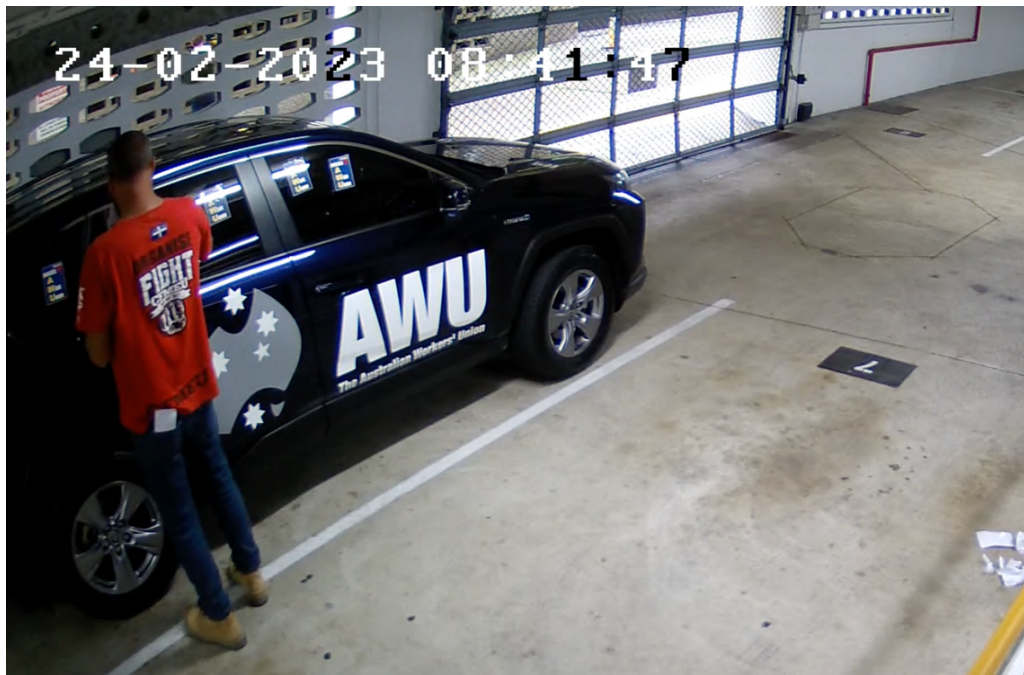


Figure 9: CFMEU member plastering AWU stickers on an AWU vehicle, and around the parking lot
(Source: CCTV Camera)

191. An AWU organiser who knew [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] saw them and attempted to stop them, leading to a slanging match.
192. When [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were finished the AWU cars were not driveable.



Figure 10: CFMEU-plastered stickers on AWU vehicle.

193. By itself, something like this sounds no worse than a childish prank, but it was the start of a pattern of conduct. The stickers became a large part of the CFMEU campaign. There are other instances where AWU officials returned to their cars and were unable to drive away because the windscreens were covered with these ridiculous stickers.



Figure 11: A separate incident of CFMEU members covering AWU vehicles in similar stickers.

194. In any event, the CFMEU conduct should not be dismissed as a joke - the entry to the carpark, and the damage to the carpark and to the AWU cars constituted deliberate trespasses committed by the senior CFMEU officials [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It is another example of lawlessness.

195. When I asked [REDACTED] about this incident he declined to answer the question upon the grounds he may incriminate himself. [REDACTED] was given the opportunity to be interviewed, but declined.

HOSTILITY TOWARDS CONTRACTORS AND EMPLOYER GROUPS

196. Hostility between trade unions and employers and employer associations is to be expected; in some ways it is the reason each exists.
197. Again, there is plainly a line in a civil society between representing contending interests and unjustifiable aggression. There is no room for violence.
198. Yet, there was violence.

“It’s a picket line ya fuckin’ cunt”

199. Throughout April 2024 there was a dispute over the Cross River Rail project.
200. As part of the dispute, the CFMEU organised and manned picket lines at various sites on the CRR. Picket lines are a common and legitimate means of protest. They provide an opportunity for the picketers to persuade others to join their cause. They should never result in violence.
201. On 30 April 2024 a picket line was formed at the Dutton Park site on the CRR. Non-CFMEU workers attempted to cross the picket line. There was a violent brawl between the two groups which was captured on video. Two non-CFMEU workers were manhandled, pushed and shoved and punches were thrown; one had his shirt torn off.³⁰



³⁰ The man whose shirt was torn was the subject of an attempted assault at 5am on 31 July 2024 when two men, probably armed with baseball bats, attacked him as he was leaving his home to travel to his work on the disputed site. The press reported that the police were investigating whether the CFMEU was involved: “I know it was you: Cross River Rail worker blames CFMEU for pre-dawn assault”, Nine.com.au, 1 August 2024.



Figure 12: Picket Line Brawl (Source: 9 News 31/07/2024)

202. No doubt it can be argued that responsibility for the outbreak of the brawl should be shared, but that would not excuse either side for participating. To the extent it matters, there is a reason to regard the principal fault to lie with the CFMEU. Amongst the CFMEU picketers were two organisers, [REDACTED]. It has been alleged that when a non-CFMEU worker approached the picket line, [REDACTED] shouted “*It’s a picket line ya cunt*” and encouraged a fight by daring the non-union workers with “*Try and cross it. Try and cross it*”.³²

The Grim Reaper

203. On 8 February 2022 the CEO of the Master Builders’ Association was contacted by the Special Emergency Response Team of the Queensland Police and warned that a CFMEU protest was coming. SERT is commonly known as the Riot Squad.

31

32

204. The Riot Squad was correct: approximately 5,000 CFMEU members had gathered in Emma Miller Place in the CBD with the intention of marching on the MBA offices in Spring Hill.
205. The reason for the protest march was over a potential restructuring of BUSSQ – a superannuation fund favoured by Michael Ravbar.³³ It was not a real dispute; the issue had been manufactured by those organising the march.
206. The march was led by Michael Ravbar and Jade Ingham, with special guest appearances by the Grim Reaper and a coffin – if what followed was not as serious as it turned out, the scene would have been comical.
207. Inflammatory speeches were given by both Ravbar and Ingham. By the time the protestors arrived at the MBA offices they were described as being in a “frenzy”. The whole building was placed in lock down. The Riot Squad placed themselves on the ground floor. The offices have glass doors and glass curtain walls on the ground floor. The protestors tried to get access by beating on the glass and trying to force the doors. There was loud chanting, including protestors shouting “*You fucking cunt*” when they saw the CEO.
208. When they could not break in, the protestors hoisted the coffin into the branches of a pandanus tree immediately outside the window of the CEO of the MBA – he was shouted at – “*If you don’t fix this we will end you*”.



Figure 13: The Grim Reaper expresses his disquiet with a proposed superannuation reform.

³³ The suggestion was that BUSSQ would be amalgamated with another construction industry superannuation fund, CBUS. But the protest was absurd: an amalgamation of that kind would require months of negotiation before it could be approved by APRA. In any event, the amalgamation never happened.



Figure 14: A coffin hoisted outside the window of the CEO just after the CFMEU promised to “end” him.

209. The cartoonish imagery of the Grim Reaper and the coffin stood as a warning to MBA employees of their likely fate should they disagree with the CFMEU. When the Grim Reaper leads a mob of 5,000 chanting workers it is bound to have some impact and, unsurprisingly, several MBA employees were very distressed by the incident.³⁴ There were also some quite appalling comments made by members of the CFMEU mob (see “Come out here and I’ll fuck you”, below).

“There’s a bullet with your name on it”

210. The Cross River Rail Project was a hotspot for CFMEU violence. One witness called it “Ground Zero”.
211. An industrial relations representative for one of the contractors on the CRR described how he suffered three years of constant abuse from CFMEU officials. He said the officials and members acted as a “collective” and described them as “angry, foaming at the mouth” and that they would “attack anyone with industrial relations in their title”. The IR adviser ended up moving to another project.
212. In one instance it led to a death threat.
213. In 2021 an apparently simple disagreement over an asserted Right of Entry at the Boggo Road site escalated to a point where two CFMEU officials verbally assaulted an IR representative. The officials were named, but they will not be identified in this public version of the report because what follows clearly constitutes a crime.

³⁴ The estimate of 5,000 participants comes from the CFMEU press release. There was another estimate of “thousands” in the article “Protest disrupts Brisbane traffic, streets closed”, Brisbane Times, 8 February 2022.

214. During the argument the more senior official told the IR representative that “We know where you live”. By itself that is a threat. But the organiser went further – he told the IR representative “There’s a bullet with your name on it – we’re gonna get you”.

A “Convicted woman basher!!!”

215. Around April 2023 the CFMEU began a personal campaign against another industrial relations adviser on the Cross River Rail Project.
216. When the CFMEU met resistance from the IR adviser it set out to destroy the man and his career.
217. The technique was crude: officials from the CFMEU made deliberate, serious, and false statements defaming the man and then published the false statements in the most public places in Brisbane.
218. It was an organised campaign: the CFMEU made up crude, hand-painted placards, each about 120cm by 60 cm. The placards named the man and included a large image of his face. The placards carried slogans – “Convicted woman Basher!!!” and “General Degenerate”, and others. These are just two of the placards:



Figure 15: Publicly displayed poster (left) with the text “I like contacting female workers more than half my age!!!” and “They scraped the bottom of the barrel when hired me”. Another publicly displayed poster (right) with the words: “CPB IR” “Convicted woman basher!!!”

219. The placards were placed on the public street in some of the busiest streets of Brisbane – Vulture Street and Roma Street.

“Come on, fucking hit me, you weak cunts”

220. On 20 April 2020, two organisers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], entered the site of the Marine Parade apartments in Labrador on the Gold Coast, fabricating a concern for the safety of workers on the site, and then acting entirely inconsistently with the safety of those workers.
221. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] deliberately blocked a concrete pour. They spoke very aggressively to a Work Health and Safety Inspector who was on the site. [REDACTED] then tried to start a fight with the workers on the site.
222. [REDACTED] taunted the truck drivers; *“Come on, fucking hit me. I want you to hit me.”*
223. When the truck drivers declined to run him over, [REDACTED] turned to the workers on site and said *“Come on, fucking hit me, you weak cunts.”*
224. A Deputy President of the Fair Work Commission described [REDACTED] conduct as *“totally aggressive and improper behaviour”* and said it was delivered in an *“intimidatory manner”*. The Deputy President suspended [REDACTED] Right of Entry.³⁵
225. Although this conduct might, by itself, seem extreme, the fact is that it was not the worst thing that [REDACTED] did on that occasion. [REDACTED] also abused a woman in the most disgusting and degrading terms – a matter which will be detailed later (see *“You fucking cunt dog”*, below).

“Grubby little cunt”

226. On 8 March 2019 a CFMEU official, [REDACTED], attempted to stop work on the Sunshine Plaza site because a worker, employed by a shop-fitting business, was not a member of the CFMEU.
227. [REDACTED] conduct was captured on video. He told the worker that he was a *“grubby little cunt who refused to join the union”*.
228. The judge who heard the matter described [REDACTED] conduct as *“aggressive, intimidatory, loud, abusive”* and as *“pure industrial standover tactics”*.³⁶

“You fucking dog cunt”

229. On 23 August 2019 [REDACTED] entered the Logan Enhancement Project on the Gateway Motorway. In a completely unprovoked outburst, [REDACTED] called the site supervisor *“you fucking dog cunt”* and continued shouting and yelling aggressively.

³⁵ [REDACTED]

³⁶ [REDACTED]

230. Although there was no justification for doing so, [REDACTED] then fabricated an account that he had been assaulted – “*we’re going to sue you, you grabbed my throat, you fucking dog cunt*”.³⁷

Other industrial prosecutions

231. A picture of the CFMEU attitude toward contractors can be obtained by taking a few examples from the long string of industrial prosecutions of the CFMEU. They tell a story that the CFMEU, and its officials, were quite willing to disrupt work on sites to inconvenience and financially damage contractors with a view to obtaining some kind of industrial advantage.
232. There are far too many prosecutions to list the lot - these are just some examples.
233. In 2018 Michael Ravbar, [REDACTED] disrupted the Bridge 21 site on the Sunshine Highway, shutting down operations, by placing themselves in front of moving trucks, and making “*unprovoked*” and “*entirely inappropriate*” attacks on the site safety officer. Heavy fines were imposed, including personal payment orders against Ravbar and [REDACTED] was required to undergo “*anger management*”.
234. In 2018 a number of CFMEU officials manufactured a Right of Entry dispute, refused to produce entry permits, and shut down operations on a site on the Bruce Highway/Sunshine Coast Motorway. This was repeated on seven or more occasions. The officials were arrested – [REDACTED] [REDACTED] twice, and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] once each. Heavy fines were imposed and personal payment orders made against [REDACTED] [REDACTED]³⁸
235. In 2018 a number of CFMEU officials disrupted the Logan Enhancement Project by making multiple illegal trespasses onto the site, and false Right of Entry claims. Very heavy fines were imposed, including personal payment orders against [REDACTED] (\$24,000) and [REDACTED] (\$12,000).³⁹
236. Between 30 April and 2 May 2018 several officials of the CFMEU disrupted work on the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing by entering a site and refusing to produce entry permits. Amongst others, [REDACTED] were fined for their breaches.⁴⁰
237. In 2019 [REDACTED] was prosecuted for stopping a concrete pour at the Bridge 22 Pacific Highway Upgrade. At trial and on appeal, [REDACTED] claimed an entitlement to have stopped the concrete pour on safety grounds, claiming there was an “*imminent danger*”.

37 [REDACTED]

38 [REDACTED]

39 [REDACTED]

40 [REDACTED]

██████ evidence on this was rejected at both levels, with one of the judges expressing “*considerable credibility concerns as to the entirety of his evidence*”.⁴¹

238. In 2020 Michael Ravbar and ██████ deliberately entered the Southbank New Performing Arts Complex under a false Right of Entry claim. Heavy fines were imposed.⁴²
239. In 2020 the CFMEU deliberately stopped a concrete pour during the construction of a Coles Distribution facility in Redbank. The two officials involved were ██████ and ██████. The judge found that their actions were “*motivated by industrial relations conditions referable to the non-union agreement in place*”.⁴³ Very heavy fines were imposed, including personal payment orders against ██████ and ██████.
240. In 2020 two organisers, ██████, abused a site manager, stopping work at the Central Energy Plant Towers Site, telling him “*you don’t know what the fuck you are doing*”.⁴⁴
241. In 2020 ██████ and ██████ manufactured a Right of Entry dispute on the CRR, making “*insultingly childish comments*” toward the site manager.⁴⁵
242. In 2021 the organiser, ██████, instigated a Right of Entry dispute by refusing to undergo a safety induction, and wandered unaccompanied around a site on the Pacific Motorway Upgrade. His actions caused the stoppage of the laying of a lane of asphalt.⁴⁶
243. In 2021 Michael Ravbar and ██████ were heavily fined following two instances – one at the Gabba site, and the other at the Roma site of the CRR. These were instances where Ravbar and ██████ refused to sign in or undertake safety inductions. In the instance of ██████ he made deliberate physical contact with those on site. Heavy fines were imposed and personal payment orders were made.⁴⁷
244. In 2021 three officials of the CFMEU manufactured an industrial dispute for the purpose of moving a particular dogman from the Brisbane Racecourse project to another site. When the employer refused, the CFMEU simply shut down work on the project. Very heavy fines were imposed (\$750,000 on the CFMEU).⁴⁸
245. I could go on, but it seems pointless – it would just be more of the same.

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HOSTILITY TOWARD WOMEN

246. This might just be the single worst aspect of the violence perpetrated by the CFMEU.
247. In addition, the CFMEU's treatment of women is deeply hypocritical.
248. Although the CFMEU boasts of its promotion of equal treatment of women, its actions show otherwise: the material shows the CFMEU had a focus on attacking women, and using tactics which were abusive and degrading.
249. Witnesses came forward with many stories proving dangerous and damaging conduct by CFMEU officials and members toward women. Some of the women are so traumatised they would not permit their stories to be reproduced in this report – they still feared retribution. In addition, I have decided not to include the accounts of some of the women because after speaking to them, I was concerned reproducing what they had to say may cause them emotional harm.

"You fucking cunt dog"

250. On 20 April 2020 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] arrived at a site in Marine Parade, Labrador. Some of what happened that day on that site has already been detailed (see *"Come on, fucking hit me, you weak cunts"*, above).
251. The fact is that [REDACTED] did something worse, much worse: he attacked a female health and safety advisor in terms which should never have been used and should never be used.
252. In his prosecution [REDACTED] admitted to disgraceful conduct, but as part of bargaining to secure a guilty plea, it was agreed with the CFMEU that the prosecutor would not press offences relating to [REDACTED] personal abuse of the safety advisor.
253. The true position is that when the safety advisor told [REDACTED] that she intended to call the police, he loudly said *"you fucking cunt dog"*. If that was not bad enough, [REDACTED] then began to bark like a dog. He then repeated the statement and the barking on and off, until the police arrived, when he ran away.⁴⁹

"You should be dragged out of here"

254. In about 2020 a female public servant arrived at the CFMEU offices as part of a delegation. She was soon asked by [REDACTED] to separate herself from her colleagues and to come with him into another office.
255. Once she was seated Michael Ravbar entered. He locked the door from the inside – which would prevent other members of the delegation entering the room. [REDACTED] – a big man – remained, standing beside Ravbar; both stood between the woman and the door – there was no escape.

⁴⁹ This account was given to me by the victim of the abuse. It is also recorded in press articles from the time: *"CFMEU Organiser abused female safety rep"*, Courier Mail, 10 December 2020.

256. Ravbar began to berate the woman, shouting, getting close to her face, using abusive and denigrating language. Ravbar made it plain that the woman was being watched by the CFMEU. He said the woman “*should be dragged out of here*” and she was told “*we’re after you!*”. This went on for about 15 minutes.
257. The woman was alone and scared. There were times when the woman thought Ravbar was about to attack her physically. When the woman was allowed to leave the room she left the CFMEU offices immediately. A report of the incident was made. The woman required psychological assistance.
258. It should be noted that [REDACTED] responded in writing to questions about this episode. [REDACTED] vehemently denied it occurred. But I have no doubt the account of the woman, which was confirmed by an independent witness, is true. [REDACTED] had declined to meet me in person; the woman and her corroborating witness were perfectly believable. It is telling that Ravbar declined an invitation to respond to this matter.

“How does it feel to know your Mum is a fuckin’ grub?”

259. The 2023 Labour Day celebration was intended to be a family event and unionists were encouraged to bring their children. There were special activities for children, including face painting.
260. Late in the day a female official from the AWU and her 13-year-old child were confronted by a heavily built man. The man was wearing a CFMEU t-shirt and his face and forehead were painted with the words “*Australia’s Worst Union*”.
261. The man came right up to the woman and the child and pointed to his forehead:

Man: “*How do you fuckin’ like this?*”

Woman: “*Beautiful – you must be really proud.*”

Man: “*Yeah, I fuckin’ am.*”

Woman: “*Just leave, just leave.*”

Man: “*You’re nothing. You’re a grub. You’re a sell-out. You sell out workers.*”

Woman: “*Don’t do this in front of my kid.*”

The man then drew near to the woman, turned and spoke directly to the child:

Man: “*How does it feel to know that your Mum is a fuckin’ grub who sells out workers?*”

Security then arrived and the man snuck away.

262. The man involved has not been identified, but this cannot be regarded as a rogue member acting on his own initiative. The conduct is similar to and consistent with aggressive conduct of other CFMEU members at around the same time. In any event,

the woman said she recognised Jade Ingham standing less than 50 metres away, probably within earshot of the conversation.

263. Although he declined to take an interview, Ingham did take an opportunity to deny any recollection of this incident in a written response to some questions.

“Come out here and I’ll fuck you”

264. The following occurred during the protest by the CFMEU on 8 February 2022 which ended outside the offices of the MBA (see *“The Grim Reaper”*, above).
265. When the CFMEU’s protest arrived at the offices of the MBA, men in the front line, pressed on the glass walls and called out to young women they could see through the doors and windows – they called out to the young women *“Come out here and I’ll fuck you”*.
266. The Riot Squad stepped in and shepherded the women away to a safer place in the building.

“Is that your old man on the video? – He’s a fucking cunt”

267. Reference has already been made to the use by the CFMEU of its Facebook page to identify and humiliate WHS inspectors (see *“Hostility toward the WHS Inspectorate”*, above). The following is a graphic example of that and the CFMEU’s attitude toward women.
268. In around June 2022, the 21-year-old daughter of a WHS inspector was attending her local gymnasium in suburban Brisbane. Thankfully, she was there with some friends.
269. Unprovoked and unexplained, a man came to the young woman in the gymnasium, and asked: *“Is your name [withheld]?”*. When the young woman said “yes”, the man responded *“Is that your old man on the video? – He’s a fucking cunt”*.
270. The young woman’s friends intervened and stopped the man taking it further. The identity of the man is not known.
271. The only sensible inference is that the video the man referred to was one of the abusive “videos” posted by the CFMEU on its Facebook page.

“We know where you live”

272. In the afternoon of 23 March 2023 there was an incident involving approximately 25 CFMEU men threatening three AWU organisers, one of whom was female. There is a video recording of the incident (see *“You fucking sell-out cunts”*, above).
273. The CFMEU singled the female out for special treatment, yelling at her that they knew her home address and the identity of her husband. One even observed that the organiser had changed her haircut from her Facebook posts.

274. It is not possible to identify the persons who actually conveyed the threats to the woman, but from the video and other means it is known that senior organisers from the CFMEU were present when the threats were made – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Two CFMEU delegates, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] can also be seen on the video, directly involved when the threats were made.

E . WHAT MUST BE DONE ?

275. Several witnesses said that since the commencement of the Administration the south-east Queensland construction sector has been peaceful or, at least, relatively peaceful.
276. This cessation of violence demonstrates two important things. The first is that the CFMEU campaign was planned and controlled from the top: once Ravbar and Ingham were removed, the violence abated. The second is that the cessation of violence proves that the cycle of violence can be broken.
277. In my view, the Queensland CFMEU can be restored to function as it used to function – a tough representative of its members, operating lawfully to secure improved conditions and safety in its members workplaces.
278. To break the cycle of violence and to end the culture of violence will require good strong leadership. That can be assisted, in the short term, by some steps which I will suggest below. But it will take time.

F . RECOMMENDATIONS

An end to the lawlessness

279. It might seem obvious, but the CFMEU's attitude to obedience to the law needs to change immediately. No longer can the CFMEU encourage or tolerate breaches of industrial and criminal and regulatory laws. No longer can a fine be absorbed as a cost of doing business. Members bear the extraordinary costs of such conduct, including by the payment of increasingly large penalties and the significant legal expenses incurred in defending such cases. The CFMEU bares the cost of the reputational damage caused by the lawlessness, but also inflicts it on other parts of the union movement. The Administration is committed to conducting an effective union, but also one that is a lawful enterprise.

RECOMMENDATION 1: *I recommend that the employees, delegates and members of the CFMEU be advised that from now if they are successfully prosecuted for breaches of industrial laws they will be required to justify why they should not be disciplined for their unlawful conduct. Such discipline may, if the conduct is sufficiently serious, include termination of employment and expulsion from membership.*

Personal payment orders

280. Any attempt by the Administration to uncover information regarding the defeat of personal payment orders is likely to fail: further investigation will be stone-walled by privilege claims. The Fair Work Ombudsman, however, holds superior investigative powers which may be capable of getting to the bottom of this important issue. Advice should be promptly sought about whether steps taken to defeat personal payment orders is unlawful and, if so, what steps should be taken to draw this matter to the attention of the Federal Court or any other Court that made the order.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *I recommend that the information collected in this investigation be referred to the FWO and that the Administration co-operate with the FWO in determining whether, and if so by whom, any personal payment orders have been disobeyed. Further, advice should be promptly sought about whether steps taken to defeat personal payment orders were unlawful and, if so, what steps should be taken to draw this matter to the attention of the Federal Court or any other Court that made the order.*

Disciplinary action

281. Immediate disciplinary action is warranted against several individuals named in this report. The disciplinary action against each varies depending on their present role with the CFMEU.
282. The reasons for this disciplinary action are sufficiently revealed in the body of the report. In some instances there are additional grounds: some of those named have repeatedly engaged in conduct which has led to heavy fines being imposed on the CFMEU; some have even had their rights of entry cancelled or withdrawn on character grounds.

RECOMMENDATION 3: *I recommend the immediate dismissal of several current officials of the CFMEU and the removal of several more as delegates. Where appropriate, steps should be taken to determine whether their membership of the CFMEU should be terminated*

283. Those persons will be identified to the Administrator in a separate private report.

The Youth Crew

284. The Queensland CFMEU has a group or sub-branch known as the Youth Crew. The age of those eligible to join the Youth Crew is unclear: one witness, [REDACTED], said the potential members were aged between 17 and 23; another, [REDACTED] said it was open to members under 35 years. [REDACTED] said there were about 150 members.
285. Numerous witnesses said that the Youth Crew was a particular problem. Many witnesses described how the Youth Crew was critically involved in many of the violent

episodes catalogued above. One witness described the Youth Crew as a “*wrecking crew*” and “*a hit squad*”.

286. It is presently not clear whether the Youth Crew serves any useful purpose. Until matters settle, it would be preferable if the Youth Crew in Queensland ceased operations.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *I recommend that the operations of the group or sub-branch known as the Youth Crew be suspended.*

287. In due course it can be considered if there is good reason to revive the Youth Crew.

Facebook and other social media

288. The abusive and inflammatory content posted by the CFMEU on its Facebook page was repeatedly identified as a serious source of violence. The stories told by individual WHS inspectors, and their families, show just how pernicious these entries were. The most poisonous content was posted as a reply or comment following the original CFMEU post.

289. Yet it was not clear who was placing the posts. Whenever I asked a CFMEU official they claimed they did not know who controlled the Facebook page; when I attempted to ask questions of the person who was paid to be in charge of the CFMEU social media, he would not speak to me without the assistance of a lawyer.

290. There appears to be no clear chain of control, if there is any control at all.

291. This problem can be corrected. This solution can be applied to all aspects of social media used by the CFMEU. I understand that pursuant to a National restructure of the communications function of the Union, including that of the Branch, the role of the Branch in posting material on social media has recently been substantially changed.

RECOMMENDATION 5: *I recommend the CFMEU's use of social media be in accordance with a clear social media policy.*

292. That policy should include the appointment of a small control group, being the only persons able to place posts on social media in the name of the CFMEU. In other words, it would mean someone could be held responsible if and when abuse occurs.

Women

293. The CFMEU's attitude and conduct towards women needs to change urgently.
294. The problem is serious and will be difficult to correct. Removal of some problematic characters will assist, but that is nowhere near enough.
295. I understand that pursuant to a National restructure, the CFMEU will invest \$5.4 million over 5 years focussed on addressing behavioural change by men in the industry

towards women, including conduct by staff and delegates of the Union. The CFMEU will employ a Project Officer and staff necessary to deliver on the program and will be subject to a steering committee and an enhanced role for the National Women's Committee. I recommend that the Union appoint staff, as soon as possible, to advise on the design and implementation of a framework to address the gendered issues which currently dominate the CFMEU.

RECOMMENDATION 6: *I recommend that the CFMEU appoint staff, as soon as possible, to advise on the design and implementation of a framework to address the gendered issues which currently dominate the CFMEU.*

296. That will take time, so an interim measure should be implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 7: *I recommend that the employees, delegates and members of the CFMEU be advised that any conduct of a kind which is abusive or threatening, or is sexual harassment, is a ground for immediate termination of employment and may result in termination of membership of the CFMEU.*

Geoffrey Watson

17 June 2025

APPENDIX A

Terms of Reference

I request that that you Geoffrey Watson SC, investigate the CFMEU Construction and General Division, Queensland/NT Branch and the associated state registered entity ("the union") and inquire into the following matters:

1. Credible allegations of violence, threats of violence and menacing conduct from the period 2015 to date, including allegations of such conduct by or against employees and former officers of the union.
2. The culture and actions embraced by the former leadership that tolerated, accepted, promoted and failed to confront a culture of violence and menacing conduct in the union and the industry as a way of doing business.
3. The culture of the union that lead to threats against other unions and unionists, disrespect and threats against regulators, and isolation from the broader union movement.
4. Identify the consequences of the union's culture and attitude to the broader democratic principles of unionism and provide case studies about those consequences.

In the investigation of these matters, I request that you co-operate with and interview, if appropriate, police, regulators, others within the union movement and employers, as well as union employees.

In addressing the staff of the union, I made clear that union values include openness, honesty, accountability and transparency and that the values of criminal and threatening cultures include retribution, retaliation and a code of silence.

I directed staff to fully co-operate with this investigation, and made clear that I will not tolerate pressure, directly or indirectly, on others not to cooperate with the Administration or the investigation.

Information required should be treated with the strictest confidence. The capacity and willingness of those that are the subject of inquiry to seek to victimise and retaliate against members must be considered.