

ACTU President heads to Burnie to back striking Saputo workers

The ACTU stands in solidarity with maintenance workers in Burnie, north-west Tasmania, who have been taking protected industrial action against Canadian dairy manufacturer Saputo for over three months to win pay parity with their Victorian counterparts.

Tasmanian Saputo workers are currently paid wages that are 23.5% less than those on the mainland, despite the company being one of Australia's largest dairy processors.

The union movement condemns this pay inequity and supports the ongoing efforts of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU) in their fight for fair pay, with bargaining ongoing since August 2023.

On Tuesday 27 August, ACTU President Michele O'Neil will join workers at a rally outside the Saputo factory in Havenview, Tasmania, to show the union movement's solidarity for these workers and call on Saputo to offer a fair deal. The industrial action follows Saputo's renegeing of a prior in-principle agreement, which resulted in a union boycott of Saputo products, including popular brands such as Cheer, Devondale, Cracker Barrel, Great Ocean Road, King Island Dairy, Liddells, Mersey Valley, South Cape, Tasmanian Heritage among others manufactured by the dairy processor. Saputo's biggest clients for these products are Coles and Woolworths.

The ACTU calls on all Australians to stand with these workers by supporting the boycott until a fair deal is reached.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"The strength and determination of Saputo workers is inspiring, and the union movement will stand with them every step of the way until they receive the pay they deserve.

"It's unacceptable that workers in Burnie are paid 23.5% less than their Victorian counterparts for doing the same work. This is yet another case of corporate greed at the expense of hardworking Australians who are facing cost-of-living pressures.

"If Saputo wants to be respected by local communities and consumers, they need to treat their Tasmanian workers with dignity and offer them a fair pay deal.

Quotes attributable to CEPU Tasmanian Secretary, Michael Anderson:

"Saputo has not only disrespected its Tasmanian workers leading to this strike, they have also disrespected Tasmanian farmers by cutting their milk price by about 15%.

"Now that the milk season is upon us, Saputo's anti-Tasmanian position of starving out its employees who seek to have the company uphold its own stated politics of fairness and equality will be plain to see for all Tasmanian businesses and farmers.

Quotes attributable to AMWU Tasmanian Secretary, Jacob Batt:

"Workers across Tasmania are fed up with being told they deserve less. It's time Saputo puts their workers before their profits and offers a fair pay deal.

"This isn't just about pay parity – it's about standing up to greedy companies that think they can push around Tasmanians who are struggling with the cost-of-living."

ENDS

Saputo Rally Details

WHEN: 12:30pm, Tuesday 27 August

WHERE: Outside Saputo factory, 148 Old Surrey Rd, Havenview TAS 7320

AMWU Media Contact: Sonia Feng 0478 599 580

ACTU Media Contact: Cameron Warasta 0447 159 467