

Oz waterside workers strike over job insecurity

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about bloody time

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has called a 24-hour strike at three major ports, saying negotiations with Patrick Stevedores over pay and conditions have reached a dead end.

The MUA says Fair Work Australia has granted permission to shut down docks in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane from 7:00am on Saturday.

Workers at Fremantle docks will strike on Monday.

Victorian branch secretary Kevin Bracken says the old agreement expired in October.

Mr Bracken says the union is not just concerned about pay.

"It's about our conditions of work, about having a safe workplace, and about having a career," he said.

"In the bulk and general business, 60 per cent of the workers are casually employed with no annual leave, no holidays, no long-service leave, no guarantee that they are going to work there ever again.

"The negotiations have been going on since August. The agreement expired in October. Our members are seeing it as the company is stalling [and] doesn't want to make an agreement, and is using it as a wage pause for our members."

The Union wants a 6 per cent wage increase, but Patrick says the demands amount to a 32 per cent rise in salary costs.

Patrick says Australia's importers and exporters will bear the brunt of the strike, with the action to affect the delivery of almost 18,000 containers.

The company and the union attended a conciliation meeting yesterday and agreed to hold further talks next month.

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