



**MEDIA
RELEASE**

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CFMEU and Westgate workers vindicated

Workers charged with over 80 criminal offences have been vindicated after all but five of the charges were withdrawn in a directions hearing in the Melbourne Magistrates Court today.

Victorian Secretary of the CFMEU, Bill Oliver, said "This is a stunning and well-deserved result. It is a result that leaves the Australian Building and Construction Commission with egg on its face, after they released a statement of claim last week that sought to use these criminal charges as the basis of a civil case."

"By throwing out almost all the charges against the Westgate workers – and completely exonerating the two union delegates involved – the Magistrate and prosecutors have acknowledged that, despite the claims of the ABCC and the Deputy Prime Minister, these workers are not thugs or bullies, they are simply normal blokes who were angry about losing their jobs."

"As Rob Stary, the lawyer for the men, noted outside court today, it is now incumbent on Deputy PM Julia Gillard to apologise to these men for her characterisation of them as thugs and bullies. We'd politely suggest to the Deputy PM that she should perhaps wait until a court case actually occurs before she attacks working Australians to score cheap political points."

"What is truly disappointing in all this – although not unexpected - is the partisan political and cynical way in which the ABCC have gone about attacking these workers and the CFMEU. The ABCC have used unproven criminal charges to concoct a bogus civil case. They've defamed the workers and the CFMEU as part of their ongoing, desperate efforts to justify their existence."

"We've now had the case against Mr Shearer dropped because of lack of evidence, after the ABCC hyped their evidence and attacked him and the CFMEU through the media. We saw them run a campaign against CFMEU official Noel Washington in the media, only to have that case dropped for lack of evidence. Now we've seen this latest case reduced from 80 criminal charges to what are basically five traffic offences, a mere week after the ABCC leaked their statement of claim to the media."

"It begs the question, when is the ABCC, supposedly an impartial government agency, going to stop playing politics? Now this case has gone so badly for them, we are asking ourselves, what rubbish are they going to make up next?"

"Once again, the ABCC have proven they cannot be trusted to run a fair and impartial case against working Australians and their unions. Not only are they failing politically, they are also costing taxpayers millions of dollars in court cases that go nowhere! It is time Julia Gillard scrapped the ABCC," Mr Oliver said.

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