

UNION RAMPING UP STRIKE ACTION

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Striking CFMEU members march through Fremantle.

CITY maintenance workers have stepped up their industrial campaign against Fremantle council.

About 45 Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union members gathered for a strike outside the council's new HQ in Kings Square on Friday, marched through the streets, and disrupted the council's monthly meeting at the North Fremantle Community Hall on Wednesday evening.

One union organiser has also vowed to target councillors at October's election if the city won't remove a controversial clause in their workplace agreement.

Clause 19.3.2 of the agreement allows the council to force workers onto unpaid leave if they don't have sufficient holidays to get them through a partial shutdown. It was used to stand down around 60 workers when WA went into lockdown in April last year.

CFMEU organiser Michelle Sheely said workers wanted to get back to work without the fear of being dismissed at any time.

They didn't want to embarrass the city but many had been left in financial strife when the clause was invoked.

"It's a disgrace to the City of Fremantle that workers have to take extreme action for job security," Ms Sheely said.



The workers gathered outside the new Walyalup civic centre.

Covid-19 was projected to see the city lose \$6 million in revenue between April and July 2020, although the council is running behind on its audited figures.

Directors and managers took a voluntary 20 per cent cut to their salaries, but the union for local government, racing and cemeteries employees says that in March alone its members were asked on average to give up between \$3000 and \$3500 in wages.

CFMEU Assistant Secretary Brad Upton warned councillors he would do everything in his power "to go to every house in this area and get them all kicked out" in October.

Mr Upton said councillors were not listening to the workers and were refusing to remove or amend the clause.

A City of Fremantle spokesperson responded by saying the clause has been in place since 2011 with both the CFMEU and the LGRCEU parties to the agreement at the time.

But they said the council had “reviewed the clause and suggested changes” and would “continue to negotiate in good faith in the hope of reaching an agreement that is satisfactory to all parties”.

At Wednesday’s council meeting, there was a delay when union members started recording proceedings, in breach of the council’s meeting rules. There were protests from several councillors before deputy mayor Andrew Sullivan defused the situation by explaining the rules and promising a hard copy before the next meeting.