

# Now DP World engulfed in an industrial wrangle

David Sexton

AS ONE industrial tempest winds down, another appears to gather strength.

News that the Patrick dispute is close to resolution came almost simultaneously with the announcement of strikes at DP World operations in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, which in turn followed a strike in Fremantle.

More strikes occurred at Melbourne and Sydney last weekend creating headaches

for the international stevedoring and logistics giant.

The issues are very similar to the issues at Patrick, with the union wanting more money, more permanent positions and fewer casual workers.

Agreement would form the basis of a new enterprise bargaining deal, the previous one having expired on June 30.

All five DP World terminals are affected: Melbourne, Sydney (Port Botany), Brisbane, Fremantle and Adelaide.

The first talks were held in

March with further negotiations expected today and tomorrow.

*Lloyd's List DCN* has approached both parties for details about what has been sought and offered.

But so far, neither side will give away any detail.

Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) assistant national secretary Warren Smith said the "in-principle" agreement with Patrick showed the union was genuine about negotiating.

"We've just been able to reach an in-principle agreement

with Patricks, the country's other major terminal operator," he said.

"This shows that when both parties are prepared to sit down and talk constructively, an agreement can be reached.

"The MUA is always willing to sit down and negotiate in good faith."

Earlier, Mr Smith took a more bullish line and said his members had been "outraged at DP World's consistent failure to put a decent offer on the table".

"Stop-work meetings around the country have unanimously endorsed a round of protected action to send a clear message to the company that reductions in wages and conditions, combined with an inadequate approach to stevedoring safety, are unacceptable," he said.

"There are further meetings with the company planned for later this month and the union hopes a decent offer will be forthcoming."

A spokesperson for DP World said the company "is committed to ensuring long-term business sustainability and value for our customers and shareholders, as well as providing development opportunities for our workforce".

"We are very concerned and disappointed with the strike

actions and work limitations being initiated by the union around the country, especially when the process of negotiations is being done in good faith with meetings scheduled for next week," she said.

"It is not conducive to negotiations when our businesses are being disrupted.

"This industrial action is causing significant financial impact, not only to DP World but also to our direct customers - shipping lines, importers and exporters, as well as several manufacturing and retail businesses that are dependent on this critical logistics service.

"The slow economic activity in the non-resources sector will be further impacted adversely in a period that is normally referred to as the peak season.

"We are doing our best to minimise disruption to our customers."

Also ongoing is the dispute between the MUA and Chris Corrigan's POAGS/QUEBE Logistics, a disagreement that caused wharfies to picket Appleton Dock when the company used managers for stevedoring work late last month.

Police were called to the dock to keep order, though there were no reports of arrests or serious incidents.

Talks between the parties

are set for Monday and Tuesday next week. That has not stopped Chris Corrigan from making bold, anti-union statements in the national press.

He told a national newspaper that Australian IR was based on a "false premise" - that bargaining favoured the employer and unions needed special privileges to correct the imbalance.

As the then managing director of Patrick, Mr Corrigan clashed with the MUA in 1998 when he locked out his workers and brought in an alternative workforce, famously bringing guard dogs and ball-clava-wearing security guards onto the wharves.

In 2006 he left Patrick following a hostile takeover by the Toll Group.

He has been active in the logistics scene this year, using Qube to buy the remaining 50% stake in P&O Trans Australia (POTA) from DP World.

## DP World vs MUA

- EBA expired on June 30 this year
- MUA wants more permanent and fewer casual workers
- DP World says strikes are not conducive to negotiations

Photographer: www.photosydney.com.au



SIGN OF THE TIMES: Now DP World faces Australia-wide union campaign on wages and conditions.