

26 June 2024

### **Fair Work Commission asked to order suspension of industrial action in Wilmar factories**

The Fair Work Commission has scheduled a hearing for 4pm tomorrow (Thursday) to consider an application from Wilmar Sugar and Renewables for Commission orders on unions to suspend industrial action that has delayed, and continues to threaten, the annual crush in four North Queensland districts.

On Monday afternoon, three unions notified Sugar and Renewables of plans for a series of one-hour stoppages at all eight Wilmar factories over the next two weeks.

A withdrawal of labour by members of the three unions would leave the site and equipment at risk of damage. The company has sought assurances that key operators would remain on site to ensure the safety and operational integrity of key equipment, however those assurances have not been forthcoming.

In those circumstances, Wilmar has lodged an application with the Commission seeking orders to suspend the threatened industrial action.

A similar withdrawal of labour forced the shutdown of the Inkerman Mill earlier this month, just one day after it started crushing.

A spokesman for Sugar and Renewables said that the safety of persons and plant could not be jeopardised.

“We will not risk damage to the mill that could put it out of commission for a lengthy period,” he said.

“That would have significant impact on employees, growers and the community.

“Without an assurance that operators will remain at their station, we would have to shut down the mills.

“Safety is not negotiable. We are faced with issues of the safety of people on sites where high-pressure, high-speed equipment is potentially unattended by trained operators,” he said.

“We have informed the Commission of the circumstances and potential impacts and asked for relief from such industrial action while there remain options to resolve an enterprise agreement through bargaining.”

As of today, all eight Sugar and Renewables factories, and the Sarina Bioethanol Distillery, are in production or ready for production after weeks of delay caused by industrial bans and stoppages.

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