

# Bob Carnegie Defence Campaign

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## The fight goes on. We can win!

On 4 February 2014, Australian trade union and community activist Bob Carnegie is due to appear in court again.

Construction company Abigroup, part of the Lend Lease empire, is suing him and two unions, the CFMEU and the ETU, for a total of \$15 million damages over the strike in August-October 2012 at the Queensland Children's Hospital (QCH) construction site.

Bob Carnegie got involved in the QCH dispute, despite not working on the site, because court orders had been served on, and obeyed by, all the union officials, including the site delegate, to stay away from the site.



Workers strike to support Bob in February 2013.

The QCH workers, still in dispute but deprived of leaders or organisers, asked Bob to come and help.

He came and helped them organise a regular community protest at the site, regular dispute meetings with democratic discussion, dispute bulletins, delegations to other workplaces, and a hardship fund.

The workers won their demand for a union-negotiated site agreement including a clause with guarantees for workers employed by subcontractors rather than the main contractor. Days later, Abigroup initiated charges against Bob Carnegie of contempt of court.

They said he had disobeyed court orders which instructed him, too, to stay away from the site.

There was a campaign by trade unionists and socialists to defend Bob Carnegie, which included strikes at all the big construction sites in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney on 11-13 February (when the case came to court) and strikes and a demonstration in Brisbane on 18 August (when the verdict was announced). Finally Bob was acquitted on the grounds that the terms of the court orders had been unclear.

**But the civil case for damages remains.**

*Continued overleaf*



### Workers' action gets the goods!

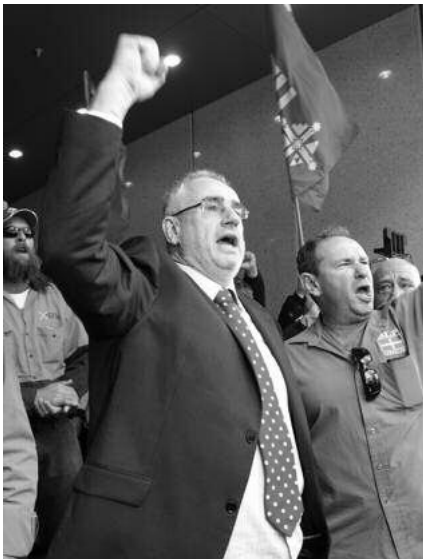
The victory in the contempt-of-court case was a huge blow for the corporate agenda.

It happened because of a huge campaign of working-class solidarity — thousands of construction workers and dockers in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney struck to support Bob, with hundreds of trade unionists worldwide sending in message of support. Activists in Britain organised pickets of Lend Lease's headquarters and flagship construction sites, as well as actions at the UK offices of the Queensland and Australian governments.

The result shows what's possible when workers act, and stand firm. More action could pressure the judges in the civil case, too.

In Britain, construction electrician Frank Morris (pictured) was recently reinstated to his job on the Crossrail transport construction site after being sacked for raising health and safety concerns. A direct-action solidarity campaign, targeting construction contractors and their supply chains, built up so much pressure that a previously intransigent management gave in.

**The lesson is: even the most hard-nosed corporate bosses can be brought to their knees when workers stand together and fight.**



Suppose you see striking workers on a picket line. You ask about the issues; they convince you of their case; and so you stay, and come back again on other days, to support them.

You have signed no contract with the boss against whom the dispute is conducted. You

have no obligation to him. And yet he can sue you for the losses he suffers through the dispute?

Could he also sue you if you just gave money to the hardship fund for the dispute? Or sent a message of support?

If you joined a demonstration against the invasion of Iraq, should the police be able to sue you for the cost of the measures they took?

Or shopkeepers in the area of the demonstration, if they lost business? Or the government, if it had been forced not to join the invasion and thus suffered the cost of cancelled military preparations?

To defend Bob Carnegie on this issue is to defend the basic right to protest. Of course Abigroup does not think it can get millions of dollars in damages from Bob Carnegie, a seafarer by trade who has also worked in construction and has no more economic resources than the average worker.

**It is bringing the case in order to intimidate others. It must not be allowed to.**

## Bob Carnegie: years of commitment to the union movement

**1985:** Bob was the first person to be arrested during the bitter South East Queensland Electricity Board (SEQEB) dispute. He was arrested nine times and jailed for three weeks.

**1988-1994:** Seamen's Union of Australia (SUA) Honorary Queensland Branch President.

**1984-1992:** Co-Chairperson Queensland Unions Against Apartheid.

**1994-1998:** Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Southern Queensland Branch Organiser.

**1995-2009:** Convenor of the Workers' and Civil Rights group. This group waged three huge campaigns to maintain Common Law access for injured workers in Queensland.

**1998:** During the Patrick waterfront dispute, Bob worked with Californian longshore workers to launch a rank and file led boycott of the scab-loaded Columbus Canada. International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Locals 13 & 63 defied secondary boycott laws for 17 days. This act of international solidarity helped to win the dispute.

**2004-2008:** Builders' Labourers Federation Queensland (BLF Q) organiser.

**2007:** Awarded the Civil Rights Awards by the Australian Plaintiff Lawyers Association for a lifetime of devotion to the cause of injured workers.

**2007:** Made a Patron of the Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society (QARDSS).

**2012:** Presented with two awards by the Builders' Labourers Federation Queensland for community activism.

### What you can do:

1. Pass a resolution in your union or community organisation
2. Send a donation to the campaign. Mail a cheque/money order payable to the "Community Workers Alliance", PO Box 298, Corinda, Queensland 4075 or a deposit to the "Community Workers Alliance" account, BSB 064-170, account number 10579398, Commonwealth Bank.
3. Organise a picket, protest, or other action at a Lend Lease site in your area.
4. Sign the petition at [bit.ly/bob-c](http://bit.ly/bob-c)
5. "Like" on Facebook: [facebook.com/DefendBobCarnegie](https://facebook.com/DefendBobCarnegie)

## Corporate Australia on the offensive: push them back!

**The Victorian Supreme Court has issued wide-ranging injunctions against community protestors opposing the development of a McDonald's restaurant in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.**

The court decision echoes the legal proceedings in Bob's case.

The community picket was established on 1 July in a bid to halt the demolition of an old dairy and the construction of the fast food restaurant at the site in Tecoma, in the Dandenong Ranges.

McDonald's Australia sought an injunction on 16 July 16, naming eight protestors as defendants, and asking the court to appoint two of them as the "representatives" of other protestors to whom the in-

junction would then apply even though the court could not name them.

A similar representative order was issued by the court against picketers in the dispute between Qube Ports and the MUA at Port Melbourne's Station Pier on 29 July.

On 24 May, the Victorian Supreme Court also found construction union CFMEU guilty of contempt for failing to comply with the court's orders to end the blockade of Grocon's Emporium and McNab construction sites last year.

Corporate Australia is on the offensive. It is using the courts to bully and intimidate workers and community activists who seek to stand up for working-class interests.

**The victory in Bob's contempt-of-court case shows that they don't always get their own way. Support Bob on 16 October, and strike a blow back!**