



Resolutions - MUA International First Nations conference

The International First Nations Conference, hosted by the Maritime Union of Australia, met on Gadigal land in July 2025, with over 100 Indigenous union delegates and allies from all over Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii and Chile. The following resolutions were considered.

Solidarity with Striking Qube Heavy Lift Crane Crew

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference extend their full solidarity and support to the Qube heavy lift crane crew currently engaged in their eighth week of industrial action at the Port of Brisbane and the Wambo Wind Farm. These workers are standing firm for fair market rates and just working conditions in the face of a massive corporation that turns over billions annually.

Many here will recall the bitter history associated with Qube's predecessor, Patricks, and the notorious tactics employed during the 1998 Patricks Wharf Dispute. That struggle stands as a powerful and historic victory for the workers and their union, the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). It is a reminder that when workers stand together, even the most well-resourced corporate interests can be challenged and defeated.

We also express our sincere gratitude to the Queensland branch of the MUA for their unwavering solidarity and practical support — for organising support on the wharves and ships at the port. Their actions embody the spirit of unionism and collective strength.

We endorse the continued solidarity and call for all unions and workers to support the Qube heavy lift crane crew to achieve a decisive victory for the workers.

We condemn Qube Heavy Lift for their heavy handed tactics, and call on them to engage with the CFMEU Queensland to pay fair market rates and provide good working conditions.

Moved: Bradley Anderson

Seconded: Anthony Cook

Palestine Motion MUA International First Nations Conference:

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members note with distress that as this conference takes place in Sydney, the State of Israel is starving the population of Gaza. Children have been starved to death by the State of Israel while this conference has taken place.

The State of Israel is on trial for genocide, a charge brought by South Africa, supported by Ireland and others. Israel's most senior leaders have been charged with war crimes.

It is not a coincidence that countries like South Africa and Ireland are leading these cases in the international courts. No one knows more about Apartheid than South Africans. The wounds of British imperialism still deeply felt in Ireland. We as First Nations peoples in Australia understand genocide and apartheid as well.

The Australian Government is still allowing Arms components manufactured in Australian suburbs directly into the weapons cache' of the Israeli military. This makes the Australian state complicit in genocide.

When ordinary Australian people protest these weapons manufacturers, and trade with Israel, they are attacked by Australian Police. MUA Officials, Organisers, Delegates and Members have been attacked, arrested and thrown into the lockup for standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza, and standing against Genocide. The State Governments ordering the Police to take these actions are complicit in Genocide.

First Nations members of the MUA will never stand by idly and allow a Genocide to continue. We will fight in solidarity with all those who are prepared to take a stand for justice, and struggle for peace.

We commend the National Council of the MUA in taking a principled stand on Palestine, in particular the action taken against shipping giant Maersk for its complicity.

We call upon the MUA to pursue every opportunity to fight complicity with Israel's Genocide alongside our comrades in the rest of the labour movement, and with the broader working class.

The time for words has long, long since passed. We must take action and allow the Palestinian people to live, and live in peace.

Commits to **amplifying First Nations voices** within our union and across the movement calling for justice in Palestine.

Calls for an **immediate arms embargo and sanctions** against the Israeli government, Israeli officials and corporations involved in war crimes.

For a Free Palestine.

Moved: Brendan Rotumah

Seconded: Tane Johnson

MUA National First Nations Committee

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference resolve to reestablish a National First Nations Committee to progress the actions called for at this conference, and the Quadrennial National Conference resolutions that affect our people.

The committee will consist of a male and female First Nations member from each port and respected First Nations MUA Elders and Officials. A rank and file Chair and Co-Chair will be nominated at the first committee meeting.

The Committee will meet quarterly or more often. The committee will seek to meet in person once each year.

Moved: Ashley Spowart

Seconded: Vicki Morta

MUA National Council First Nations Rank and File Representative

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference proposes that like our MUA sisters, there be a First Nations rank and file member elected at the quadrennial elections to the National Council.

Moved: Vicki Morta

Seconded: Blake Hurley

Pilliga Motion MUA International First Nations Conference:

- The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference condemn Santos for smashing through the opposition of the Gomeroi Traditional Owners and seeking to destroy the natural and cultural heritage of the Pilliga. Further, we condemn the State and Federal Governments for backing Santos in this destruction. Gomeroi and the Unions have met with State and Federal Governments again and again seeking that they intervene and stop this project going ahead. They have not. They have decided to back corporate greed.
- This conference commends the MUA in leading the Union movement into the fight against the Santos gas mine in the Pilliga, in Solidarity with Gomeroi Traditional Owners. We are proud to be the inheritors of the struggle from our MUA Elders, including Uncle Chicka Dixon, and so many others.
- Host Plus – our superannuation fund – invests our money in Santos. We will not participate in funding or profiting from destructive corporate greed. We call upon Host Plus to divest from Santos.
- We call upon the Union to facilitate Gomeroi speakers at major sites to educate our members about climate change, First Nations Sovereignty and the significance of this struggle.
- We call upon the Union to organise a delegation of First Nations MUA members – particularly from NSW and QLD - to Narrabri to meet with Gomeroi, to learn about their struggle, culture and history.

Mover: Jack Bathis

Seconded: Elijah Figg

Defend Joel Shackleton: Drop the charges and support First Nations workers

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference note that:

Joel Shackleton is the Koori Organiser for the CFMEU Victoria Branch, and the only First Nations organiser employed by the CFMEU in Victoria.

In July 2024, The Age and Channel 9 cut together and published footage of Joel defending his family from a personal attack directed at his mother. Joel was subsequently charged with two criminal charges of making threats to kill and making threats to inflict serious injury, which carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Despite a raft of allegations of violence against multiple figures in the construction industry, Joel remains the only person subject to new criminal charges since the CFMEU was put into administration by the Labor government in August 2024.

Joel has also been placed on a blacklist preventing him from working in the construction industry and had his right-of-entry permit under the Fair Work Act removed.

When the CFMEU was placed into administration, the 270 people removed from their elected positions included First Nations delegates and workplace leaders across multiple states. Their role in providing union leadership on First Nations issues and support to First Nations construction workers has not been replaced. The position of NSW First Nations organiser remains vacant and the CFMEU in NSW has ceased its work in tackling black cladding and ensuring Indigenous contracts benefit Indigenous workers.

The CFMEU's national First Nations committee has not been supported by the Administrator and has ceased to function.

The delegates to International First Nations Conference resolve that:

We offer Joel our full solidarity as he fights the charges against him, and call for other unionists and First Nations organisations to do the same. Joel must be congratulated for doing hard, groundbreaking and successful work supporting First Nations people into good jobs in the construction industry, and into fighting racism in the workplace and in broader society.

The charges laid against Joel reflect a racist media, quick to use the trope of the angry black man to feed into the racism of Australian society. The charges also reflect the racism of the Australian criminal justice system, where Indigenous people are far more likely to be charged and convicted.

The charges against Joel must be dropped.

Joel must be removed from the Victorian construction blacklist.

The CFMEU must be removed from Administration. The elected structures that incorporate First Nations people into the CFMEU's elected leadership must be restored, and the CFMEU's national First Nations committee resourced and restored.

Mover: Vicki Morta

Second: Jack Bathis

First Nations Men Standing up Against Misogyny and Gender Violence

The MUA International First Nations Conference resolves that we will stand against misogyny and gender violence. We will call out these behaviors that are not part of our culture and not in line with our values as First Nations people.

We will also celebrate who we are, defying the ongoing efforts by racists and ignorant culture war protagonists who stereotype Indigenous men as unloving, uncaring and violent, ignoring the long history of disempowerment of Indigenous men to exploit our families, our labour and our land.

We call on all men to end violence against women, to be accepting of our neighbors for who they are and who they choose to be, their sexuality, their gender and their culture.

We call on our unions to fund continued education of our members about the need to end these toxic behaviours and also to challenge racist stereotyping.

We support the template clauses developed by the MUA Women's Committee and call on all officials and rank and file to fight for the establishment of these clauses in our Enterprise Agreements.

Mover: Aiden Davis

Second: Anthony Cook

Full Decommissioning to Protect Sea Country and Create First Nations Jobs

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference resolves that the legacy of offshore oil and gas must not be a burden on future generations. Across Australia's oceans, rusting rigs, pipelines and infrastructure threaten marine ecosystems and cultural heritage. First Nations communities have long warned of the risks to Sea Country and are demanding a role in its protection and recovery.

Decommissioning is a chance to do things differently — to clean up the mess, to create safe, union jobs, and to embed First Nations voices at the centre of decision-making and the workforce.

The MUA International First Nations Conference:

- Calls for full removal of offshore oil and gas infrastructure in line with best environmental practice and international obligations;
- Rejects proposals to dump or abandon assets on the seafloor, including artificial reefing without full free, prior and informed consent;
- Recognises Sea Country as living cultural heritage, and affirms that decommissioning must be guided by the principles of care, repair, and justice;
- Demands government and industry invest in a domestic decommissioning industry, using Australian ports, workers and expertise;
- Calls for targeted pathways to train and employ First Nations people in decommissioning, marine science, and environmental monitoring;
- Supports the development of a national regulatory framework that centres environmental protection, cultural rights, and worker safety.

Mover: Paul Maney

Second: Taamara Husband

Climate crisis impact and solidarity

1. The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference note with distress the impact of the escalating climate crisis on all peoples on this planet, and the particularly strong impact on First Nations people and their lands, waters and customs, across Australia, the Pacific and around the world.
2. Torres Strait Islanders face an existential threat from rising sea levels, and recently ran a court case seeking orders that the Australian government has a duty of care to prevent and address damage to their land, Sea Country and the culture due to global heating. While the judge agreed with the facts presented by Torres Strait Islanders, he ruled that there was no legal mechanism to force the Australian government to take action that matches the scale and impact of the climate crisis.
3. Runaway global heating is overwhelmingly fuelled by burning oil, gas and coal and continues to increase through opening new-projects. The CSIRO says that from January 2024, the remaining carbon budget for a 50% chance of limiting global heating to 1.5°C has been reduced to 275 billion tonnes of CO₂. This budget will be used up in seven years at 2023 emission levels. The IPCC has found that emissions from existing fossil fuel infrastructure will push the world beyond 1.5°C of global heating.
4. The MUA International First Nations Conference call for the MUA, ITF, and IDC to support First Nations seeking to protect their lands, waters and cultures from the impact of climate change.

Moved: Taamara Husband

Seconded: Vicki Morta

Independent national First Nations Voice

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference note that the legislated South Australian Voice to Parliament has been doing good work influencing laws that affect South Australian First Nations people.

We also note the progress made by our Victorian First Nations brothers and sisters through the Victorian First Nations Assembly, the Yorrook Justice Commission and Treaty legislation.

There is no excuse for any government not to take these steps as well.

The MUA International First Nations Conference calls on all governments to implement the proposals in the Uluru Statement from the Heart that are also commitments that the Australian government ratified in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Moved: Jimmy Beggs

Seconded: Ashley Spowart

Oppose Black cladding

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference note that billions in government contracts are required to be spent on Aboriginal-owned businesses. There is a requirement that these businesses be 51% Aboriginal-owned, yet

there is no requirement that they employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. Many of these so-called First Nations companies make no effort to train or employ First Nations workers, representing a huge loss of income and opportunity to our people. Moreover, the processes used by Supply Nation and similar state bodies to designate whether businesses are Aboriginal-owned are deeply flawed.

The MUA International First Nations Conference resolves:

- To support union campaigns to ensure that companies benefiting from requirements to use Indigenous businesses train and sustainably employ Indigenous workers.
- To support requirements that First Nations-owned businesses be verified and be held accountable by a panel of Traditional Owners from that Country, Indigenous elders and unions.

Moved: Sophie Dryden

Seconded: Glen Kelly

Recording our history - First Nations History of Solidarity and the Legacy of our Elders

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference notes that our cultural knowledge and knowledge of the struggle is being lost every day with the passing of our elders.

We call on our unions to record the experiences and wisdom that our union First Nations elders hold and further, to educate all members about the vital role our unions have played in the steps towards justice and recognition that our people have achieved.

Moved: Justin Timmins

Seconded: Robin Hajinoor

Peaceful co-existence

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference note that since the 'dawn of colonisation' in 1492, when Christopher Columbus left his home port to explore the world, First Nation Peoples have been the recipients of armed aggression from invading forces as colonising nations sought to plunder the wealth and resources of the 'discovered nations'. In this process First Nation Peoples have been relegated to the status of a dispossessed people with the corresponding social inequity resulting from this dispossession.

Colonial dispossession has profoundly and enduringly shaped social inequalities in post-colonial societies, manifesting in systemic racism, economic disparities, and cultural marginalisation, this dispossession has seen the forceful removal of land and resources from First Nation Peoples creating a legacy of poverty, limited opportunity and intergenerational trauma that continues to impact the health, well being and social participation in contemporary societies.

Colonial Dispossession has profoundly impacted First Nation Peoples with Economic Inequality, Social Exclusion and Marginalisation, Intergenerational Trauma and Health Disparities, Loss of Cultural identity and Heritage and Spatial Inequality.

With over 500 years experience of confronting military aggression by colonial forces attempting to dehumanise First Nation Peoples domestically and internationally we are well placed to voice our opposition to this ongoing behaviour.

The MUA International First Nations Conference resolves:

1. To condemn the development of the military/industrial complex that hives off the wealth of our nations denying economic, social, cultural, educational and political investment in the most vulnerable sector of our communities.
2. Recognising that Peace is Union business, this conference calls on all nations to emphasize the importance of peaceful resolution methods to real or manufactured disputes leading to armed conflict and to reaffirm the principles of the U.N. Charter, specifically the prohibition of the use of force and the obligation to settle disputes peacefully. We call for a cessation of all hostilities, a return to negotiation and dialogue, and the use of established international mechanisms for conflict resolution.
3. Recognising that armed conflict is a threat to the very existence of First Nations Peoples, their communities and civilian populations caught up in the target area of these obscene actions, affecting working men and women along with the horrific deaths of innocent children across these war zones, impacts negatively on our food, water, energy and medical needs and security, we call on the United Nations Security Council to convene an international conference on Peace and Security.
4. Recognising that Palestinian Peoples inherent rights and interests are being confronted by the genocidal acts of Israel backed by the USA, this conference condemns these actions and we seek a delegation from this conference to address the Australian Government on this unsustainable behaviour and have a delegation attend the U.N. Security Council via a supporting NGO or other such agency to present our opposition to these disgraceful acts against humanity.

Moved: Terry O'Shane

Seconded: Vicki Morta

Create a First Nations Employment Assistance Database

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference resolves to establish a dedicated database of Indigenous members and Indigenous job seekers, with priority for Traditional Owners from the area that will enable the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) to proactively support First Nations employment when job opportunities become available within the maritime and associated industries.

Background:

Despite progress in recent years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain significantly underrepresented in maritime and port-related employment. As a union

committed to equity, inclusion, and justice, the MUA has a unique opportunity to lead by example in closing the employment gap for First Nations people.

Proposal:

That the MUA develop and maintain a secure, confidential database specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and interested job seekers. This database will:

- Record expressions of interest from First Nations individuals seeking employment
- Include contact details, work experience, qualifications, tickets, and preferred job roles
- Match individuals with opportunities as they arise across the maritime and logistics sector
- Support union-led campaigns and discussions with employers and stakeholders about Indigenous employment targets and outcomes

Next Steps:

- Seek endorsement from relevant union committees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working groups
- Engage with Indigenous union members and community representatives to ensure the system meets their needs
- Allocate resources to build and manage the database, ensuring data security and privacy

Mover: Bradley Anderson

Seconded: Jack Bathis

Opposition to AUKUS and support for peace

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference resolve to:

Stand in solidarity with workers and First Peoples in all countries opposing war and wasteful military spending.

Call on the Australian government to take an explicit stand against nuclear weapons and war by signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) III.

Oppose the AUKUS deal and condemns the nuclear submarine programme which will require the establishment of a nuclear industry in Australia including imposing high – level waste on community and Country.

Commit to establishing links with First Nations People and Unions in the Asia Pacific region promoting peace and justice.

Moved: David Ball

Seconded: Ashley Spowart

Embedding First Nations Inclusion in Enterprise Agreements

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference recognise that structural change is needed to address the exclusion, racism, and cultural insecurity experienced by First Nations workers across maritime and offshore industries. Despite deep connections to Sea Country, First Nations people remain under-represented and face barriers to safe and meaningful employment.

Following the Respect@Work report in 2022, the Federal Government introduced a new positive duty on employers to prevent harassment, discrimination, and hostile workplace cultures — under changes to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. This duty applies to racism and cultural disrespect. Employers now have a positive duty to prevent workplace harassment, including racism and cultural disrespect, not just respond to it. Creating culturally safe, inclusive, and supportive workplaces is no longer optional — it is a legal and moral obligation.

Enterprise bargaining is one of the most effective tools unions have to deliver justice and equity. Embedding First Nations inclusion through our agreements ensures this obligation is backed by concrete, enforceable commitments.

The MUA International First Nations Conference resolves to:

1. Set intentional targets for First Nations employment and inclusion in all future enterprise agreements: these will be met using dedicated recruitment and traineeship pathways.
2. Incorporate model clauses in EA logs of claim that require:
 - a. Cross Cultural Safety Training packages; developed in consultation with the MUA First Nations National Committee and utilising the resources of the National Office and METL.
 - b. Paid leave (a minimum 14 days) and flexible arrangements for cultural and community obligations including sorry business, men's business, ceremonial duties and kinship responsibilities.
 - c. Consultation with local Traditional Owners on projects impacting Sea Country or cultural heritage;
 - d. Where elected delegate committees exist, for the MUA to make all efforts to elect First Nations delegates, and ensure that First Nations delegates and workers are part of bargaining teams and consultation processes.

Moved: Vicki Morta

Seconded: Glen Kelly

Black Lives Matter

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference condemns the obscene rate at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being held in prison and are being killed in police and prison custody.

We condemn state governments across the country who are enacting a racist “law and order” agenda, that is driving this incarceration crisis, while doing nothing to improve community safety.

We condemn in particular the CLP government in the Northern Territory that has passed a range of regressive reforms, most recently moving to provide guns to public safety officers on buses and patrolling public housing.

We stand in solidarity with all families who have had loved ones killed in custody and support their calls for justice.

We salute the courage of the family of Kumanjari White from Yuendumu, who are leading a strong campaign for justice, following the killing of Kumanjari by an off-duty police officer in Coles in Alice Springs two months ago.

We support the call from Kumanjari’s family for a demonstration against the CLP government, rejecting the entire CLP agenda, planned at Darwin Parliament on September 2. We call for all unions to support this demonstration and join us at the rally.

We call on the Albanese government to take decisive action to urgently reduce the number of Indigenous people in custody nationwide.

We support the calls from the Central Land Council and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) for the Commonwealth to withhold funding from the NT government until they establish an independent body to investigate police and reverse regressive policies leading to mass incarceration.

Moved: Josh Shackelton

Seconded: Taamara Husband

First Nations in the ITF and IDC

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference resolves to request both the International Transport Workers Federation and the International Dockworkers Council to establish First Nations Networks and formal Committees of First Nations Peoples within their organisations.

First Nations Peoples have established connections with each other and these initiatives represent an extension of these. First Nations representatives of all affiliates of the organisations will be provided with the opportunity to meet to consider the most appropriate way to establish these networks and committees and we call upon the organisations and affiliates to sponsor these initiatives to their conclusion.

Moved: Graham Norris

Second: Vicki Morta

Thank you

The MUA First Nations Rank and File members at the MUA International First Nations Conference extends our sincere thanks to our brothers Joe Williams and Tony McAvoy for speaking at our conference about their journey and for the advocacy that they do.

Moved: Anthony Cook

Seconded: Jack Bathis
