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MUA Votes for Strike on Teekay Defence Ships Over Pay

August 1, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



Maritime Union of Australia members at Teekay Shipping voted 98% in favor of protected industrial action on August 1, 2025, to demand fair wages on defence vessels.

On August 1, 2025, members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) employed by Teekay Shipping, a key contractor for Australian Government defence vessels, overwhelmingly approved protected industrial action, with a 98% ballot outcome, as reported by Mirage News. The decision stems from stalled negotiations over a fleetwide enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), with workers seeking consistent pay and conditions across Teekay's

diverse fleet, including vessels like Ocean Shield and Mercator. The MUA's National Assistant Secretary, Mich-Elle Myers, stated that Teekay's refusal to include all ships in a unified agreement has fueled discontent, leaving workers with no choice but to pursue action to secure fair wages, according to Mirage News.

Teekay Shipping, a major player in maritime logistics, operates a range of vessels supporting the Australian Defence Force (ADF), including crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) transport. The MUA argues that Teekay's highly skilled crews, vital to defence operations, face inconsistent pay compared to industry standards, despite the company's profitability. Myers emphasized that a fleetwide agreement is essential to eliminate disparities when crew members transfer between vessels. The Fair Work Commission (FWC) sanctioned the protected action, which could include work bans or stoppages, though no specific actions have been confirmed. Under industrial relations laws, the MUA must provide three days' notice before any action, giving Teekay a window to negotiate.

The dispute echoes past tensions, with a 2014 MUA vote for action at Teekay's Port Hedland operations costing an estimated \$100 million daily in iron ore exports, per the Australian Financial Review. Critics argue that the current Labor government's industrial relations framework enables such disruptions, potentially impacting ADF operations and increasing costs to taxpayers. The Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) has previously warned that MUA actions threaten economic stability, citing a 2014 Teekay dispute's \$7 million daily loss in Western Australian royalties.

Teekay has been urged to return to negotiations with a genuine commitment to resolve the impasse. As the MUA prepares for potential action, the focus remains on securing equitable conditions for workers who ensure the operational readiness of Australia's defence maritime capabilities.