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Fairfax staff return to work; campaign for quality journalism continues

Editorial workers at Fairfax Metro mastheads have returned to work this morning following a strike sparked by management's announcement of another 120 planned redundancies.

Members of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance in Sydney and Melbourne entered their newsrooms en masse for the first shift of the week but have vowed to ramp up the campaign to reverse the job cuts, which translate to about one-in-five editorial staff.

Members took spontaneous action following stop work meetings last Thursday afternoon in response to the shock announcement that management would look to make 120 full-time equivalent staff redundant amid other cost-cutting measures.

They returned to work buoyed by the show of support from Fairfax readers and journalists at other media organisations around the nation over the past few days.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said members were unanimous in the belief that if these cuts go ahead it would lead to a downgrading of the reputation for quality journalism that is the hallmark of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Australian Financial Review*.

"Independent and fearless investigative journalism that holds power to account requires investment and support from management," Murphy said.

"These cuts are a short-sighted measure that can only undermine the journalism that readers want and expect from these mastheads. They will do untold damage to the Fairfax business.

"We call on Fairfax CEO Greg Hywood and management to reconsider these redundancies and work with the journalists to find smarter alternatives to cutting staff."

Murphy said more than 10,000 Fairfax readers and supporters of quality journalism had signed an online petition calling on Hywood to reverse the cuts since Friday.

He said this was a clear sign that readers were worried about the future of the newspapers and the impact more editorial staff cuts would have on the journalism they produced.

"The quality journalism of Fairfax staff is the very reason people read and subscribe to the newspapers and websites," he said.

"It makes no sense to cut away swathes of the people who create that journalism."

Murphy said MEAA would seek a meeting with management as soon as possible to discuss the cuts.

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