



# MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, June 2, 2023

## Members to vote on industrial action as Sovereign Hill proposes to cut pay

Union members at Sovereign Hill will vote this week on whether to take industrial action after negotiations for a new enterprise agreement have reached a stalemate.

Members of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance will be asked to endorse a range of potential actions in a Protected Action Ballot which opens on Friday.

If the PAB receives majority support, it will clear the way for members to take industrial action at Sovereign Hill. This could include bans on wearing costumes and being photographed by visitors at Sovereign Hill up to a full strike.

The ballot follows the recent rejection by Sovereign Hill's unionised workforce of a pay offer that is below the rate of inflation, leading to a real cut in wages.

Workers have refused to endorse the offer from management, which also fails to reinstate penalty rates on weekends. Management is still insisting that it will put the offer to a formal vote this month.

Bargaining for a new agreement at Sovereign Hill, one of Victoria's top tourist attractions, is now in its 11th month.

The Director of MEAA's Entertainment, Crew and Sport section, Kelly Wood, said union members were angry that Sovereign Hill management had proposed replacing paid staff with unpaid volunteers if union members do not accept the offer.

"This is the ultimate insult from management and shows just how low their respect is for their workforce that they would consider replacing with volunteers the skilled and experienced paid staff who have dedicated years of their lives to making Sovereign Hill the success it is," she said.

"Our members are absolutely furious at the conduct of management throughout bargaining, which has included attempting to put the offer to a vote without complying with the Fair Work Act.

"All members are asking for is a pay rise that keeps pace with unprecedented cost of living pressures.

"The offer from management is well below the increase of the Consumer Price Index of 6.8% over the past 12 months. It is actually a real pay cut.

"Union members never take lightly a decision on taking industrial action, but the workforce at Sovereign Hill feel they have been left little choice by the actions of management.

"It is now in the hands of management to avert the potential of industrial action by revising its offer to provide a pay rise in line with inflation, restore penalty rates and agree to a cap on the use of voluntary labour and a commitment not to use volunteers to perform the work of paid employees."

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