



SAG-AFTRA STRIKE Q&A

1. Why has SAG-AFTRA called a strike?

The 160,000 members of SAG-AFTRA, Hollywood's largest union, authorised a strike if a new agreement could not be reached by Wednesday, July 12, with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, an umbrella group representing studios like Warner, Colombia, Disney, Netflix, Amazon and Apple. The Writers Guild of America has been on strike since early May. It is the first time that unions representing both US writers and actors have been on strike at the same time since 1960.

Like writers, SAG-AFTRA members are calling for higher wages, improved compensation and residuals in the streaming TV era and safeguards around the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Performers see their jobs as especially vulnerable to new technology, with generative AI able to replicate facial expressions, body movement and voice with alarming accuracy.

Although series budgets are increasing, that increase is not being reflected in the share of the money coming to performers. Residuals (payments for the reuse of their work) are also much smaller on streamers compared to broadcast TV rates.

2. Why should I support this strike?

When actors, writers, and crew members come together as a collective, our resounding message will reverberate throughout the studios and production companies, leaving no doubt that we demand nothing less than the absolute best for ourselves and our invaluable contributions.

By standing in solidarity with the striking writers and actors in the US, we can amplify their collective bargaining power. When actors, writers and crew unite, it sends a strong message to the studios and production companies that all groups are committed to fair treatment and compensation for their work. This can increase the likelihood of achieving favourable outcomes in negotiations and ultimately improve working conditions for all parties involved.

The entertainment industry is built on collaboration among various creative professionals. By demonstrating solidarity during a strike, we foster a sense of unity and mutual support among the different groups involved in the production process.

3. What does this strike mean for Australian actors and crew?

For Australian actors and crew engaged on Australian screen productions with no imported US performers/SAG-AFTRA members, there will be no change and your work will continue as normal.

For Australian actors and crew engaged on offshore screen productions with imported US performers/SAG-AFTRA members in lead roles and engaged on SAG contracts, this production may be affected and you may be stood down without pay. However, where SAG-AFTRA members have been engaged on Australian productions or on standard MEAA Equity – SPA Agreements (such as the AFFCA or ATPA), then it is likely that filming can continue as normal. Those members should contact SAG-AFTRA or MEAA for clarity.

More detailed information will be sent to MEAA members as it comes to hand from SAG-AFTRA and/or impacted productions.

4. Is it MEAA's decision to have Australian actors and crew stood down to support the strike?

No, this is not MEAA's decision. MEAA has not called a strike and has no ability to determine whether or not our members are stood down by producers.

5. Am I allowed to accept other work while I am stood down?

Unless specifically precluded from engaging in other work on your contract, cast and crew can seek other employment while they are stood down. Any such employment should not encroach on your original job, and you would still need to be available when the strike or stand down ends. However, generally the National Employment Standards (NES) doesn't preclude employees from working a second job and it is unlikely that a production would prevent this, particularly in the circumstances of a stand down. If you are unsure, MEAA can confirm this with the production directly.

6. As a crew member who has been stood down what are my rights under the relevant MEAA agreement?

It depends on the agreement you are engaged under – however it is likely that the production can stand down your employment until the strike is resolved. The Offshore agreement allows stand down under the terms of the *Fair Work Act* – this means you can be stood down without pay. Your employment will remain in place during that time, and you will accrue annual leave. If your employment is terminated, you should be paid out at least one weeks' notice period (as specified in the agreements). If you have any further questions about your rights and entitlements, please contact MEAA Member Central (members@meaa.org) on 1300 65 65 13 or your local organiser.

7. As an actor who has been stood down what are my rights under the relevant MEAA agreement?

It depends on the agreement you are engaged under – however it is likely that the production can stand down your employment while the strike is resolved. This is likely to be temporary. Your employment will remain in place during that time, and you will accrue annual leave. If your employment is terminated, you should be paid out the full value of the contract or the minimum guarantee. If you have any further questions about your rights and entitlements, please contact MEAA Member Central on 1300 65 65 13 or your local organiser.

8. How can I show my solidarity with striking US writers and actors?

Throughout the coming weeks, MEAA will provide opportunities to come together to take a photo to show collective solidarity. We will be guided by our sister union (SAG-AFTRA) on any further action we may be able to do in support. If you wish to be involved in any action / support, please click this link

<https://form.jotform.com/231920836602049>

Or scan this QR code:

