

Victory for little guy

Victory for Sydney Sauls has a bitter-sweet taste. With the help of the CFMEU, Sauls took on a multinational insurance company, Cambridge Integrated Services, and won – and in the process the fight put a strain on his marriage of 32 years.

The former bricklayer and CFMEU delegate, from Concord West, received workplace injuries to his back and shoulders about six years ago, but around 2003 he “collapsed totally”, according to Sauls, of West Concord.

For many years the 56-year-old received the statutory rate of workers compensation of \$347.90 per week.

Then in August last year, Cambridge “reassessed” him and decided he was able to find work as a safety officer.

It then reassessed his payment based on the difference between his pre-injury earnings and the job he didn’t have, physically couldn’t do and did not have the experience or qualifications for, and came up with \$4

a week. “This is a clear example of a greedy insurance company looking to save money by throwing an injured worker on the scrap heap,” CFMEU State Secretary Andrew Ferguson said.

The union has now ensured Sauls’ full entitlement has been restored and within 24 hours of a union picket he received backpay for the time he spent on \$4 a week.

Sauls said during the six months that he received the paltry \$4 a week “all the burden of paying the bills was shoved on to my wife”.

He said Christmas had been particularly bleak as “we had nothing”.

“I never went to work planning to get hurt,” Sauls said, “but at the end of the day the insurance companies don’t care. It’s where they can save some money.”

Sauls said he was happy with the outcome and grateful for the efforts of all those who took on his case. “Without the union nothing would have happened,” he said.

Ian’s no longer casual thanks to CFMEU

Ian Smyth is a plant operator who worked for the same company in Sydney for many years. The company refused to acknowledge the terms of the National Building & Construction Industry Award and continued to employ Ian as a long-term casual.

That meant he did not get any of his annual leave, rostered days off or personal leave entitlements even though he worked a five-day/40-hour week. It made it very difficult each Christmas when the company closed down and Smyth and his family were left with no income for two weeks.

Despite raising the issue with the company, Smyth’s requests for weekly hire employment were ignored. Smyth also admits he was in fear of losing his job if he made “too much of a fuss about things”.

Somewhat reluctantly, Smyth told the union what was happening. However, after intervention by the union, Smyth is still employed with the same company, but now on a weekly hire basis.

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