

Alcoa dumps Australian workers for multinational crew

Aluminium mining giant, Alcoa has angered transport unions by announcing the sale of its bulk vessel, Lindesay Clark.

The vessel has been carrying alumina from the Alcoa refinery in Western Australia to Victoria for almost 30 years.

The move has prompted action by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF) and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), who are seeking an injunction from the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure.

A spokesperson for the Minister says Australia's shipping reforms are targeted at growing the Australian shipping fleet.

"We expect over time, as long term shipping contracts unwind, companies will take up the advantages of our reforms. This will grow Australian maritime jobs and revive Australian shipping."

ITWF President Paddy Crumlin is accusing Alcoa of trying to replace its Australian crew with a multinational one.

"The ITWF won't abide companies moving away from Australian flagged ships onto flags of convenience to bypass Australia's industrial and environmental regulations," Crumlin says.

MUA Assistant National Secretary Ian Bray believes the move would put more than 30 jobs at risk and is calling on Alcoa to reverse their decision as a matter of urgency.

"Members have crewed the ship for decades and this is a real kick in the guts for the workers, their families, as well as the wider working community," Bray says.

However, Alcoa Communications Manager Nichola Holgate has hit back at the unions claiming their media release is both inflammatory and erroneous.

"Alcoa is selling its 28 year old vessel, the MV Lindesay Clark, which needs significant investment if it is to remain operational," Holgate says.

"The vessel is currently for sale and will be leaving the coast in the near future," Holgate says, revealing the crew are not Alcoa employees but employees of shipping management company ASP.

"ASP has been notified of Alcoa's decision to sell the vessel."

Servicing the delivery of alumina is critical to Alcoa's operations, so to fill the gap, they have endeavoured to charter an Australian flagged vessel.

"The only coastal domestic operator capable of providing this service has advised Alcoa they are unable to provide a suitable vessel for several months. Alcoa has, therefore, sought a temporary license because no other alternative is available," Holgate says.