

Victorian CFMEU overseer quits after claims of inappropriate comments

By [Nick McKenzie](#), [Olivia Ireland](#) and [James Massola](#)

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The long-time academics' union boss appointed to help clean up the Victorian CFMEU branch has suddenly resigned within weeks of his appointment after the union's administrator received claims he used inappropriate language.

Grahame McCulloch, a former communist, [was appointed in late August to take over the branch once controlled by John Setka after the federal government pushed the CFMEU into administration.](#)

Grahame McCulloch has resigned from his position overseeing the Victorian branch of the CFMEU. Credit: Josh Robenstone

McCulloch and administrator [Mark Irving, KC](#), were appointed following revelations of corruption, intimidation and criminal infiltration in the CFMEU in the [Building Bad series](#) published by this masthead, *The Australian Financial Review* and *60 Minutes*.

McCulloch, the founding general secretary of the left-wing National Tertiary Education Union, was expected to lead the effort to clean up the CFMEU's Victorian branch.

On Friday morning, a spokeswoman for the administrator confirmed McCulloch's departure but declined to answer further questions about the reasons for his resignation.

Sources, not authorised to speak publicly, said Irving had received informal information that he believed necessitated McCulloch's immediate departure.

Government sources familiar with the matter, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said McCulloch had used inappropriate language to women in work contexts since his appointment.

McCulloch did not respond to numerous attempts to contact him on Friday. The allegation was made informally and was not investigated.

McCulloch was a Communist Party member in the 1980s, a trait that could have enhanced his credibility with militant CFMEU members, but he has held senior Labor and superannuation roles in the years since leaving the university union in 2018.

As Irving grapples with what he called the “massive” task of assuming control of the union, the old leadership regime he replaced – which includes two now-ex senior officials contesting serious criminal charges – has scrambled to fill the void created by the transition to administration.

[Ex-CFMEU bosses Setka, Darren Greenfield](#) and Michael Ravbar are organising fighting funds and alliances with sympathetic unions, led by the Electrical Trades Union, to create a rearguard movement aimed at destabilising Irving’s administration.

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[Former CFMEU boss John Setka addresses rally](#)

Former CFMEU boss John Setka has addressed a rally at a \$1.5 billion hospital project in Melbourne.

On Thursday, several large unions resolved to organise a second day of protests next week.

Union members and delegates are getting regular text messages as part of a campaign by those opposed to the administration, portraying it as an attack on hard-fought wages and conditions.

Irving, though, has stressed his intention is to keep fighting for wages and conditions while using his extensive powers to fight bribery and other forms of corruption that have become entrenched in pockets of this industry.