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News

CFMEU pledges to continue militant operation

- by: Matt Johnston
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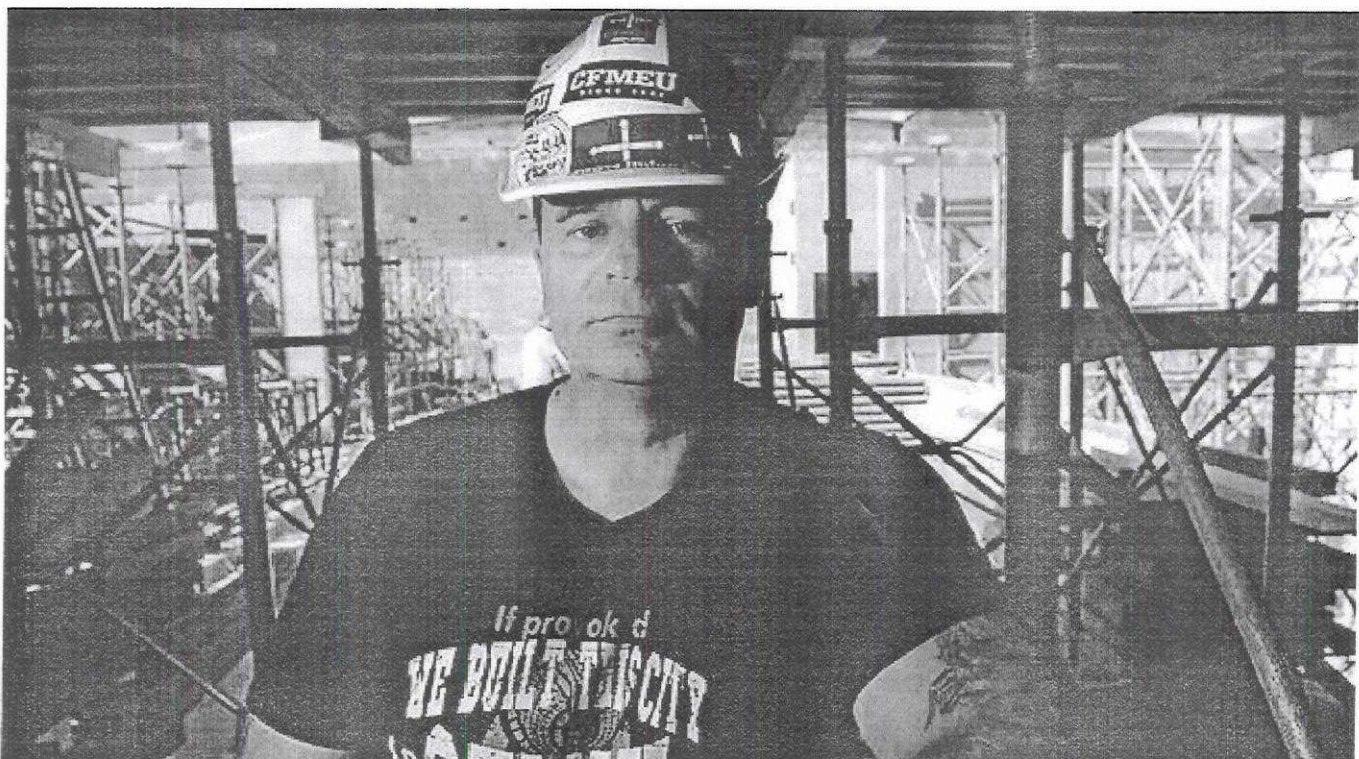
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Union boss John Setka says workplace safety is the union's priority.

Source: Herald Sun

UNION boss John Setka has vowed to keep running a "militant" organisation despite a Supreme Court contempt ruling on violent protests last year.

On Friday, the CFMEU was found guilty of defying court orders in relation to a blockade of the Myer Emporium site in the CBD.

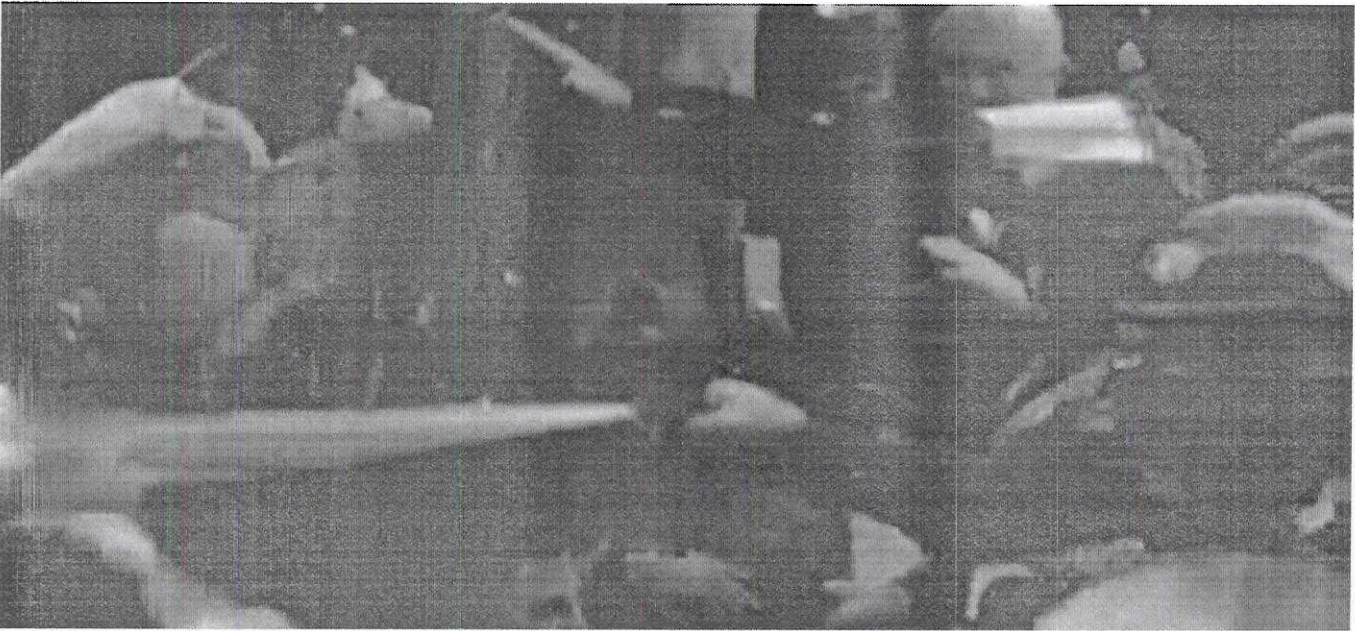
The decision could cost the union millions of dollars in costs, but Mr Setka said members expected fines and the union would be "not winding anything back".

Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews** said what happened at the **Grocon construction site last year was "wrong" and "should never occur again"** (<http://news.victoria.com.au/news/daniel-andrews-wont-bag-labor-mate-over-unions-cbd-protest/story-fni0ft3-1226650223685>).

His warning came the day after he refused to directly criticise the CFMEU, part of Mr Andrews' Left faction in the Labor Party.

Mr Setka said the union didn't set out to break laws, but "sometimes we have to push the boundaries a little".

"It's not the first time or the last time a union is found guilty of contempt," he said.



"It's not a deliberate attempt to snub our noses at the Supreme Court, that's not our goal. We don't set out deliberately to break the law, but unfortunately sometimes it's going to happen."

With the CFMEU now expected to face stiff penalties, Mr Setka was unapologetic.

"Our members have been seasoned to expect that. They want us to maintain a militant union," he said.

"Unfortunately, the price of that is we will get fines. Our union has given us a mandate, they want us to remain a militant union."

Mr Setka said workplace safety was the union's number one goal.

"If we had to break a law a little bit to save a life, what would the public expect us to do?" he said.

"Protests and marches, it's all part of the cause."

Mr Andrews was lashed by Premier Denis Napthine for failing to criticise the union.

But Mr Andrews said: "No union, no business, no Victorian, no Australian is above the law.

"What went on was wrong, the court has found that way, and it should never occur again."

The Napthine Government and the Federal Opposition is likely to maintain pressure on Labor to distance itself from CFMEU members in the lead-up to the next state and federal elections.

Federal Opposition workplace relations spokesman Eric Abetz called on Prime Minister Julia Gillard to reconsider speaking at a Trades Hall event this week because a CFMEU official would be there.

Senator Abetz said Trades Hall vice-president Shaun Reardon was implicated in Justice Anthony Cavanough's ruling against the CFMEU.

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