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AROUND THE CLOCK PICKET OUTSIDE FACTORY.

OVER A PROPOSED NEW WORKPLACE AGREEMENT

Glass wool workers strike to insulate permanent jobs

By Casey Neill

Striking workers are holding an around-the-clock picket outside their Dandenong factory over a proposed new workplace agreement.

Fletcher Insulation said the new agreement aimed to protect manufacturing jobs at the glass wool plant.

But the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) Victorian secretary Ben Davis said the Frankston-Dandenong Road company's enterprise agreement offer was an insult to a loyal and long-serving workforce.

He said Fletcher offered no wage increase, longer hours and "slashing of conditions".

"It defies logic that workers who have proved they are committed to the company and just months ago set new productivity records, could be treated so shabbily," he said.

Mr Davis said the company proposed the unlimited use of casuals for work which was usually done on overtime.

"Of 90 operators at Fletcher, between 80 per cent and 90 per cent have been there for more than 13 years and there are well over 30 who have worked there for more than 30 years," he said.

"These are people who have built their lives around the place and certainly deserve a lot better than they have been offered."

He said the employees stopped working at 7am on Friday 17 February and the AWU was trying to negotiate with the company.

A Fletcher Insulation statement said the company started formal employment negotiations through the AWU on 15 August last year.

"Fletcher Insulation looks forward to con-



Banners outside the Fletcher Insulation site.

structive discussions and is committed to developing a new employment agreement in good faith," the statement said.

"Fletcher Insulation is 18 months into a market-building, productivity and efficiency improvement programme to strengthen the business that will enable a long and sustainable future for the plant."

General manager Justin Hollis said finalising the employment agreement was important to customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders and the wider Australian community.

"We want to protect Australian manufacturing jobs by ensuring we are reliable, flexible and fair so we promote a sustainable Dandenong plant," he said.



Workers at the vigil outside Fletcher Insulation.

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