

# Solidarity

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## **SUPPORT PACIFIC BRANDS WORKERS STOP THE SACKINGS, DEFEND EVERY JOB**

WORKERS ACROSS the country are disgusted and outraged with the announcement that Pacific Brands bosses plan to sack 1850 workers. The bosses' greed is astounding.

The company has taken \$17 million in subsidies from the government in the last two years and while boss Sue Morphett has more than doubled her own pay packet from \$685,775 to \$1.86 million, which included "incentive payments" - bonuses for axing jobs. The 13 Directors now get \$15.5 million between them - an average of \$924,000 each.

The announced closures have all the hallmarks of an asset stripping exercise that demands immediate intervention by the government. The company was taken over by private equity funds backed by the Macquarie Bank in 2001.

According to union sources in New Zealand, the private equity funds took \$A100 million out in cash, loaded the company with debt and then sold it on the share market for \$A1 billion. Now they are closing operations, lining their own pockets and selling off the brand names.

### **The sackings can be stopped**

A strong stand by Pacific Brands workers will win support right across the union movement and the wider community. Already, the Transport Workers Union, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the Maritime Union have said they will block any attempt to remove machinery from the closed factories.

Protests and industrial action can galvanize support.

The company will try to wear down and divide workers by offering voluntary redundancies, crying poor and threatening wider closures, but we shouldn't let one job go. Sacked workers can work in while we continue the fight to save all the jobs.

If Pacific Brands tries to close factories, we should consider occupying the factories. Workers at Waterford Glass in Ireland have been occupying their factory since January to prevent it being closed. Thousands of people in that city are supporting the occupying workers.

It is this kind of action that can force a stronger stand from Prime Minister Rudd and Employment Minister Gillard. The Labor government must take a much stronger stand against the sackings and against greedy bosses who pocket the government handouts and then throw workers on the scrap heap.

The government must guarantee entitlements for every worker, but it should take action to guarantee every job. We should demand that the company open its books to the government and the union, so we can know the truth about all its financial operations. If necessary the government should nationalise the company.

Some, like the Daily Telegraph have tried to say that the fight at Pacific Brands is a fight to save "Aussie jobs" - but the truth is that the company is closing almost all its factories - in Australia, two in New Zealand and a major factory in China itself.

It is not Chinese workers who are cutting jobs. In fact Chinese workers are also fighting factory closures. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions has sent a message of support to the TCFUA and workers at Pacific Brands. Workers in New Zealand are also gearing up to fight against the sackings. It is industrial action, not "Buying Australian" that can save jobs. We have a common fight, against the same bosses in Australia, New Zealand and China.

Pacific Brands bosses thought they could use the financial crisis to get away with mass sackings. A strong stand by the unions can stop them in their tracks.

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