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Building industry watchdog takes 23 WA workers to Federal Court

More than 20 employees working on WA Water Corporation's new waste treatment plant are facing Federal Court action for allegedly engaging in unlawful industrial action.

The \$13.8 million project involves the construction of a new facility capable of treating 20 million litres of water per day.

In a statement of claim filed in the Federal Court last week, Fair Work Building and Construction (FWBC) alleges 23 workers failed to work on 20 February 2015 after attending a pre-work meeting in the presence of three CFMEU and four AMWU officials.

According to the statement of claim, the meeting concluded with the workers – whose enterprise agreement is not set to expire until September 2017 – determined a vote by show-of-hands in favour of taking industrial action.

The alleged stoppage delayed a concrete pour that was scheduled to take place on the project.

Under the *Fair Work Act*, it is unlawful to take part in unprotected industrial action before the nominal expiry date of a registered agreement has passed.

FWBC Director Nigel Hadgkiss said the building and construction industry was a key component of the Australian economy, employing around nearly one in ten of Australia's workers.

"FWBC is committed to ensuring that the building and construction sector is productive and harmonious. All workers have the right to be in a law-abiding workplace," Mr Hadgkiss said.

A first directions hearing for the matter has been set for 28 January 2016.

Individuals who engage in unlawful industrial action may be fined up to \$10,800 and organisations can face penalties of up to \$54,000.