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Australia's actors to vote on strike action

The Actors' Equity section of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance will ballot members next week to decide if a strike should be called on all offshore commercials, as a result of the Screen Producers' Association of Australia's (SPAA) sudden decision to rip up Equity/SPAA Offshore Commercials Agreement without any warning or consultation.

Offshore Television Commercials are commercials which come from outside Australia (predominantly USA and Europe but also from Asia) to be made in Australia.

Equity's National Performers' Committee (NPC), made up of some of the country's leading performers, today voted unanimously in favour of conducting a ballot and recommended members vote in favour of strike action on offshore commercials from August 7, 2009.

In a letter to Equity last week SPAA head, Geoff Brown, advised that after the agreement is terminated on August 7: "SPAA members will determine the conditions of to be offered to employees..."

Prior to this letter there had been no discussion between SPAA and Equity or between any of SPAA's members and Equity expressing concerns about the agreement or seeking amendments to the agreement.

"It is very unfortunate that it has come to this," said National Equity Director Simon Whipp. "But the producers' decision to walk away from this Agreement without consultation, without negotiation and without raising their concerns leaves performers with no alternative."

The Agreement between the SPAA and Equity sets the minimum terms and conditions, and broadcast and other rights for artists working on television and theatrical commercials produced in Australia – predominantly for use by overseas advertisers.

"We are hopeful that common sense will prevail; that SPAA will agree to negotiate in good faith as is standard practice for agreements across Australia's entertainment industry," said Whipp

Details of the ballot will be issued to Actors' Equity members next week.

For more information or comment please contact Simon Whipp on + 61 413 153 059 or email simon.whipp@alliance.org.au

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (the Alliance) represents the people who entertain and inform Australia. Members of the Actors' Equity section of the Alliance work as professional actors, singers, dancers, comedians, announcers, hosts and other performers across the country.

**For more information contact: Simon Whipp on +61 413 153 059
The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain**
