Unions Want ACTU to Endorse Protest Plan against Israeli Settlements

Many Australian unions are signing up to an international campaign to boycott Israeli goods.

But a fight is brewing over a proposal for the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) to endorse the movement.

The broad-based divestment and boycott campaign is targeting companies that profit from the Israeli settlements.

The Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, the Queensland branch of the Rail Tram and Bus Union and the Finance Sector Union have all passed a resolution supporting the international campaign of "boycott, divestment and sanctions" (BDS) against Israel.

Communications Electrical Plumbing Union national secretary Peter Tighe told The Australian the electrical branch of his union had adopted the resolution and he would now take it to the broader CEPU, then the ACTU.

"We had a 30 or 40 minute presentation from a delegate who had visited Palestine," Mr Tighe said.

"The council decided we would support the BDS. We are not anti-Jewish; we just think the human misery over there is outrageous. We think the Israeli government is captive to some extreme views on the Right.

"We think it's got to a stage where we are going to have to have bans across the board."

Mr Tighe, who sits on the ACTU executive, will take a resolution to the peak union body.

"We will use our influence within the ALP to push this position," he said.

"Now you have a few unions with the same view and we can influence the political process more, we are not just one voice."

Australian Workers Union national secretary Paul Howes said he would fight any plan to see the ACTU endorse the sanctions.

"We don't believe that it's in the interests of Palestinian or Israeli workers to seek to divide them in the peace process," Mr Howes said.

"Unions are free to do what they wish but certainly I think it's a bit naive. Some unions are not fully aware of what they are signing on to."

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http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/unions-want-actu-to-endorse-protest-plan-against-israeli-settlements/story-e6frg6nf-1225938911111