

'Without us everything stops': Ambulance mechanics take industrial action

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Ambulance Victoria fleet maintenance officers Adrian Brown, who is based at the Wendouree Ambulance Victoria depot, is among those taking industrial action for improved pay and conditions. Picture by Lachlan Bence

Ambulance Victoria's fleet maintenance officers, the people who keep ambulances on the road, have taken industrial action and threatened more in their campaign for better pay and conditions.

United Workers Union members in fleet and administration, including those at AV's Wendouree depot, participated in stop work action on Wednesday and are looking toward a full-day strike in the next week or so.

UWU national ambulance coordinator Fiona Scanlon said fleet were often the "forgotten part of keeping the service running" and their workloads had increased dramatically but not their pay and conditions.

"Without them there are not any ambulances. They get that service to the community. They are not just mechanics, they have to understand all the other clinical parts of the ambulance equipment to assist in keeping cars on the road.

"There is a high level of skill required and they don't think the pay reflects that."

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The ambulance fleet maintenance officers, known as FMOs, predominantly work Monday to Friday but are on call if a vehicle breaks down out of hours or overnight.

"Fleet are the forgotten ones at AV but without us, everything stops," said FMO Tony.

There are about 30 FMOs across regional Victoria, working in teams of two to five at different locations.

The industrial action comes after the breakdown of 14 months of pay negotiations and more than 80 meetings.

Ms Scanlon said the pay of FMOs lagged behind their mechanic counterparts in other emergency services.

A full day stoppage is planned "in the near future" but Ms Scanlon assured it would not endanger the public.





Ambulance Victoria paramedics Sasha Peers, Kevin Kelly, Jade Kearney, Brendan Webster work at the Ballarat State Emergency Control Centre and took stop work action on March 25. Picture by Adam Trafford.

"When you are talking about withdrawal of labour, the public safety aspect has to be taken in to account," she said. "(A stopwork) would be inconvenient to AV but we don't believe that would endanger the public. We make sure the action will not compromise that."

The industrial action by UWU members and negotiations toward agreement on the Ambulance Victoria Enterprise Agreement 2024 are [running in conjunction with other unions representing paramedics, emergency communication centre staff and other AV sectors](#).

On March 25, Ambulance Victoria paramedics and Ballarat State Emergency Communication Centre held industrial action after [their Victorian Ambulance Union was unable to broker a new enterprise agreement](#).

The union served a log of claims on Ambulance Victoria on February 1 2023, with improved sick leave, overtime entitlements and travel allowances among its requests.