

CARNIVAL CRUISES: IN VIOLATION OF THE MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION



Maritime Union of Australia

June 2026



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INTRODUCTION

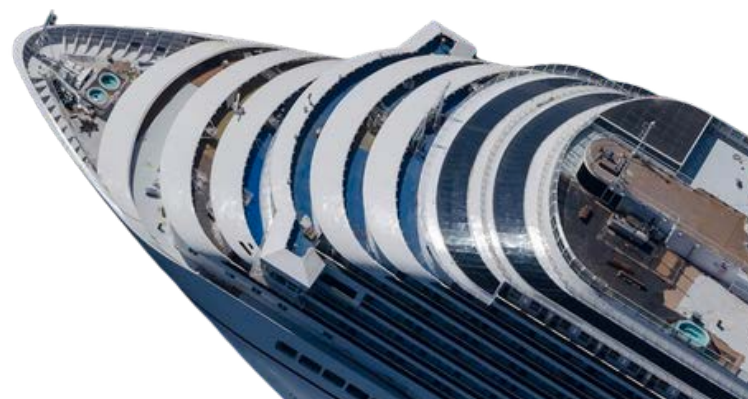
Carnival Corporation is the biggest cruise ship company in the world, with nine separate subsidiaries, including Carnival Cruises and over 90 ships. Carnival is a publicly listed company with the founding Arison family still significant shareholders. Carnival Cruises has three vessels 'home-ported' in Australia, meaning that these vessels are based in Australian ports, predominantly sail Australian waters, carry mostly Australian passengers, who pay Australian fares. Even though these vessels are home-ported in Australia, they are registered and flagged in flags of convenience registries of Panama and the Bahamas.

Carnival's Australian ships sit outside the jurisdiction of Australian labour laws as cruise ships hold a ministerial exemption from the Coastal Trading Act (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012. The company makes use of this ministerial exemption to fly its workforce into Australia from some of the poorest economies on earth to crew their three Australian ships.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has spent the last 12 months speaking to crew about their experiences onboard these ships. **Crew have made it clear that they want better pay, more time off, better access to wifi, concrete pathways to progress their career and protection from unfettered management prerogative.**

To support crew to achieve these aims, the MUA has sought to negotiate an ITF Agreement to cover each of the three Australian Carnival ships.

Carnival management has refused to enter into collective bargaining negotiations.



CARNIVAL CORPORATION: A HISTORY OF VIOLATIONS

On top of their consistent billion-dollar revenues (\$2.8 Billion USD in 2025 alone), Carnival Corporation and its subsidiaries have a long history of controversy and exploiting legal loopholes. What follows is a limited sample:

In 2012, Carnival UK sacked 150 P&O Indian crew members for protesting low wages (reportedly as low as 75p an hour) and withholding of tips. Carnival sent letters to the sacked crew reprimanding them for taking industrial action, stating, "This behaviour is not something Carnival UK is prepared to tolerate". They banished the crew from working on any Carnival vessel worldwide.

In the same year that Carnival Corp's *Costa Concordia* tragically sank and killed 32 people, Micky Arison (the CEO at the time) paid himself an additional \$90 million USD in dividends while paying the families of the *Concordia* passengers \$15,000 USD each.

In 2019, environmental organisation Friends of the Earth (FoE) gave Carnival Corp an F on their scorecard, the only cruise line to receive one that low. FoE's parameters included sewage treatment, air pollution, water quality compliance, transparency and criminal violations. Carnival Corp received an F for all of these parameters except for water quality compliance.

In 2026, Carnival Cruises denied government safety inspectors from *SafeWork NSW* entry on board the *Carnival Adventure*. Under the Work Health Safety Act 2011 (NSW), authorised inspectors and WHS entry permit holders have a lawful right to enter workplaces to consult with workers and advise them about their health and safety rights. Refusing entry to government inspectors is a clear breach of NSW safety laws. As a result of this breach, Carnival is now facing prosecution. The denial of entry raises serious questions regarding the treatment of the crew on board.

THE MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION

The International Labour Organisation Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) is an international instrument that **sets the absolute minimum international standards** for working and living conditions for seafarers. Australia ratified the MLC in 2011.

These standards are far below what Australian seafarers enjoy, and far below what most ordinary people in Australia would expect for themselves or their children.

Nonetheless, they're a minimum set of standards that the Australian government has committed to uphold and enforce. Article III of the MLC states:

Article III Fundamental rights and principles

Each Member shall satisfy itself that the provisions of its law and regulations respect, in the context of this Convention, the fundamental rights to:

(a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.



In 2025, the MUA wrote to Carnival Cruises seeking to commence collective bargaining. The MUA met with the Carnival's head office on three separate occasions. Carnival Cruises has refused to commence collective bargaining in writing, and in-person during these three meetings.

As Carnival ships have been exempted from Australian jurisdiction and access to the Fair Work Act 2009, **the ordinary pathways for workers to pursue collective bargaining in Australia are not available to the Carnival crew.**

Workers are being systematically denied the right to collective bargaining

This complaint to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) sets out how Carnival's refusal to commence collective bargaining puts Australia in breach of Article III of the MLC, our request for AMSA's as the relevant authority to enforce the MLC to take action, and how the MUA gathered the evidence.



Life Onboard Carnival's Australian Ships

Crew Testimonials

The MUA has been working extensively with crew onboard Carnival's three Australian Ships.

Many crew are working twelve hours per day, every day apart from one day a week when they have 'hours off', often for nine months straight. The pay is the worst in the industry for most crew, with those working in the lowest paid classifications receiving only \$2.50 per hour.

This is what the crew themselves have to say.

Carnival Crew Member - A.*

*Names redacted for protection.



Some crew are afraid to speak because if they do, they worry about losing contracts or facing problems at work.

Working on a cruise ship can be stressful, many of the crew members feel they work very very hard for long hours with limited rest.

I think most crew would appreciate improvements on Carnival, like pay and resting hours...

I think Carnival banned the website

[endcarnivalexploitation.org] because they do not want union information spreading easily among crew members or causing organising on board... many crew members also are very scared to have anything to do with unions because **they fear management could easily target them and not renew contract and maybe dismiss them from their work...**



*Names redacted for protection.

...if you can help us get a salary increase at least to \$1000 [USD] is like, Carnival is a big company, so it would be reasonable, so if they want to pay \$1000, they can...

*Names redacted for protection.

[illegible]

Text in image reads as written: If the GA has medical off the next off-cycle will be automatically cancelled, the off can be modified or cancelled as per operational needs, it is a privilege, and it is not mandatory.

Carnival Crew Member - D*.

*Names redacted for protection.



One thing I pray for is make haste and do what little you can for crew members **to get some kind of fair labor practice representation on board**. A lot of crew members suffer from this because they don't have any recourse at all. I am contemplating resignation. **I am tired of the bullshit.**

My experience with Carnival Cruise Line has not been a very enjoyable experience. Ever since I joined the ship... I have faced so many difficulties because of the lack of professionalism from most of the supervisors and managers... **the main issue is there is a culture of suppressing crew's issues...**

...so this is the culture in Carnival, whenever you speak up, they retaliate against you, and when I say they I mean the management. I've tried several times to reach out to the human resources department to get this issue [workplace issue] resolved but until now nothing has been resolved... **and we are now tired as crew, we want action to be done, we want something to change, because it's been [redacted] years, for me I still face the same issues over and over again, even when we escalated it to the highest office, that is shoreside, when it comes back to the ship, nothing changes.** So I believe that, whatever this Maritime Union is trying to do, is a good thing because at least it will give crew members a chance to table their issues in a fair environment, whereby they get representation to actually feel free to say exactly what they feel...

Because now the problem is if you continue to fight, you are retaliated against and it's draining. This workload is already difficult on its own now when you have to deal with such emotions on a daily basis it does take a toll on us.

(continued) **I think crew are scared [of being associated with the Union] because they are being threatened with dismissal**, the contract that we signed does have a phrase which is vague whereby they talk about crew not being allowed to have class action suits, so nobody really knows what that means...

We also know that Carnival has banned the campaign website because there was a talk that they had with us earlier in the middle of May to explain how this maritime union was not so good for the crew members, so it was a PR campaign where they were trying to give the crew their side of the story, framing and blacklisting the maritime union is a union that is corrupt and was not really for what is good for the crew, instead they were saying that they [MUA] are more interested about the monetary gain from having a large group of people joining their union...

...crew are scared [to sign the petition] because they do not know what it means for their employment status, so people are afraid to lose their jobs...

...I believe everybody wants a pay raise, regular day off, paid vacation and of course help from the Union in resolving disputes... most of the crew they not know how to defend themselves in situations where they have to go through a panel of disciplinary hearings, and they end up losing the company decides what to do with them so I think this is paramount crew deserve to get equal representation



Carnival Crew Member Example Pay Slip

PERSONALIZED SEAFARER'S AGREEMENT

CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE

1. Date of Agreement [REDACTED]	2. Place of Agreement CARNIVAL SPLENDOR
3. Ship Owner Address Carnival Cruise Line 3655 NW 87th Avenue, Miami, FL 33178-2428 USA	4. Seafarer's Name [REDACTED] 5. Seafarer's Crew Number [REDACTED] 6. Seafarer's Date of Birth [REDACTED] 7. Seafarer's Place of Birth [REDACTED] 8. Seafarer's Home Address [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 9. Seafarer's Telephone Number [REDACTED]
10. Embarkation Ship CARNIVAL SPLENDOR 11. Embarkation Location SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA 12. Embarkation Date [REDACTED]	13. Expected Position [REDACTED] 14. [REDACTED] 15. Department [REDACTED] 16. Duration of Agreement (See Annex 1)
17. Daily Wage, under Paragraph 3.C. / 3D. or 3E. \$ 23.2615 USD 18. Gratuity Wage (minimum monthly, if applicable), under Paragraphs 3.D. and 3.E. \$N/A USD 19. Non-Function Pay, under Paragraph 3.H. \$N/A USD per day. 20. Overtime Wage (if applicable), under Paragraph 3.C(i). \$ 1.9970 USD per hour. 21. Alternative Services Pay (ASP) (if applicable). \$ 18.8110 USD per day. 22. Monthly Wage, under Paragraph 3.C(i). \$ 748.00 USD 23. Sick Wage, under Paragraph 3.I. \$23.0769 USD per day. (equivalent to \$ 700.0000 USD per month) 24. Vacation Wage. See Paragraph 3.B.	



CREW WANT AN ITF AGREEMENT

The MUA is a union of maritime workers with a long and proud history. That our sister and brother seafarers are enduring such extreme exploitation while working on our coast is a personal injury to our collective dignity.

In early 2026, a group of working MUA members took annual leave from their maritime jobs, and went onboard Carnival ships as passengers. They spoke to hundreds of Carnival crew about their experiences, handed out thousands of booklets about seafarer rights, and collected hundreds of phone numbers.

In short, our organisers found a crew in urgent need of time off, improved pay, access to free Wi-Fi, and proper representation for their concerns. Many crew members also expressed fear of retaliation if they spoke openly about the MUA or engaged in union activity. The majority of the crew our organisers spoke with indicated a strong desire for significantly improved working conditions.





Taamara Husband Ferry Worker

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this statement to describe my observations while travelling onboard the Carnival Adventure in May 2026.

While crew members initially appeared comfortable discussing their experiences onboard with me, their demeanour changed noticeably once I identified myself as a member of the Maritime Union of Australia.

Several crew members became visibly nervous, frequently looking around to see who might be observing them. One room attendant pointed towards a CCTV camera and placed a finger to her lips, indicating that I should be cautious about the conversation.

Many crew members expressed concern about the security of their future contracts and appeared fearful of potential repercussions for speaking with union representatives.

Based on these interactions, it was my impression that employees had been warned against engaging with union representatives and were concerned about possible disciplinary action if they did so.

A consistent message from the employees I engaged with was that time off the ship was extremely limited and for some almost impossible to obtain. Crew members also raised concerns that their wages did not adequately reflect the hours worked or the volume of work they were required to perform on a daily basis.

I make this statement based on my personal observations and conversations with crew members during my time onboard.

Taamara Husband



Cesar Soltis Seafarer

As far as our conversation regarding the Carnival Encounter crew, many of them were overwhelmed to hear that the MUA is willing to help them to have a better working conditions & pay. Our explanation is that:

You work in Australian waters you deserved Australian standards.

I cannot believe that no one in Carnival Encounter crew contacted MUA.

This maybe because the management of the Carnival cruise line learned that we handed leaflets onboard. The reason why the Carnival management called a meeting in their 3 ships & try to intimidate their crew.

Anyone found cooperating with MUA will lose their job.

In Philippines there is a Carnival Shipping agency & if you become blacklisted you will have no option but to work back home because no one will hire you again . The pay is below poverty line. You have to obey the management or face the consequences.

In unity,
Cesar

Sue Douglas Seafarer



The crew are petrified to speak to us or to speak out about any work issue because the company threaten them in writing not to speak to us, threatens them with dismissal for organising, and demotes them or doesn't renew their contracts if they suspect they are trying to organise.

This company intimidates people into submission. It's despicable behaviour, they are scared, intimidated and afraid for their jobs. It's appalling that they are so suppressed that it's difficult to get them to open up.

Every single person who would be selected by Carnival to testify to AMSA will basically have an invisible gun to their head to protect Carnival at all costs!

Sue



Nikki Chopra Ferry Worker

While onboard Carnival the crew I spoke to were very worried about jeopardising their employment through speaking out in any public way.

Crew consistently raised concerns around their low pay, having only half a day off a week and very little time (if any) to get off the vessel when it was in port.

While we were onboard we noticed Carnival had blocked access to our website that was built for the crew to gain information on the campaign to improve their conditions.

This act of denying crew access to basic helpful information highlights how controlling Carnival are and just how difficult it is to reach crew working on these ships.

In Solidarity,

Nikki Chopra

Over the phone and in-person while the crew are onshore, the MUA has had thousands of conversations with Carnival crew on the three Australian ships.

In conjunction with crew, the MUA established a petition calling on Carnival to commence collective bargaining.

Since the MUA and crew have been organising this petition for a collective agreement, Carnival has started systematically applying pressure to discourage crew from associating with the Union.

Crew suspected of having contact with the Union have been summoned by ship security for interrogation, and official company statements highly critical of the Union have been placed on crew notice boards. Further, all crew have been summoned to mandatory, hour-long 'information sessions' where defamatory and incorrect information is given to crew about the Union; and official company statements warning crew not to access Union-provided free wifi at port stops have been widely circulated.

The cumulative effect of this anti-union activity by management is clear: there will be consequences for any crew suspected of associating with the Union. This is an explicit attempt at denying crew the right to freedom of association.

This is the petition crew that signed*:

The MUA is pushing to get a Collective Agreement to deliver Carnival Cruises Crew in Australia a regular day off, a pay rise, free WIFI, and Union support onboard to challenge unfair management decisions.

The Union needs to be able to prove to the Australian Government that the crew want a Collective Agreement that delivers these things.

If you want the Union to negotiate a Collective Agreement for Carnival Crew on the Splendor, the Adventure, and the Encounter, add your name to the petition below and join the push to make life for Carnival Crew better:

****THIS PETITION IS 100% CONFIDENTIAL – CARNIVAL WILL NOT FIND OUT WHO HAS ADDED THEIR NAME****

A full list of unredacted signatories will be provided to AMSA separately and confidentially to protect the crew from retaliation by Carnival.



CALL FOR AMSA TO INVESTIGATE AND TAKE ACTION

As outlined in the crew and MUA members testimonials, the MUA believe that hundreds of Carnival crew members have their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining being violated. We request that AMSA investigate this complaint as a matter of priority and take appropriate action.

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) is an international convention that Australia ratified on 21 December 2011.

In Australia the MLC has been implemented primarily through the Navigation Act 2012 and Marine Order 11 (Living and working conditions on vessels).

This section sets out why the MUA believes it is AMSA's responsibility to enforce the MLC in relation to this complaint. The MUA can provide further detailed advice if required.

Standard A5.2.1, paragraph 1 of the MLC provides that “where an authorized officer [...] finds that [...] there is a complaint alleging that specific working and living conditions on the ship do not conform to the requirements of this Convention [...] a more detailed inspection may be carried out to ascertain the working and living conditions on board the ship. Such inspection shall in any case be carried out [...] **where the authorized officer has grounds to believe that any deficiencies constitute a serious breach of the requirements of this Convention (including seafarers' rights).** (our emphasis).

Standard A5.2.1, paragraph 6 provides: “where, following a more detailed inspection by an authorized officer, the ship is found not to conform to the requirements of MLC and [...] the non-conformity constitutes a serious or repeated breach of the requirements of this Convention **(including seafarers’ rights)** [...] the authorized officer shall take steps to ensure **that the ship shall not proceed to sea** until any non-conformities [...] have been rectified, or until the authorized officer has accepted a plan of action to rectify such non-conformities and is satisfied that the plan will be implemented **in an expeditious manner**. (our emphasis).

Guideline B5.2.1, paragraph 2 provides “when developing a policy relating to the circumstances warranting a detention of the ship [...] the competent authority should consider that [...] the seriousness could be due to the nature of the deficiency concerned. This would be particularly relevant in the case of the **violation of fundamental rights and principles or seafarers’ employment and social rights under Articles III and IV**. (our emphasis).

Marine Order 11 Section 97 provides “if AMSA receives a complaint under subsection (1) or (2), AMSA must investigate the complaint and act in accordance with its obligations under MLC regulations”



In essence, in order for Australia to be compliant with international law, and in order for AMSA to be compliant with Marine Order 11, it must enforce the terms of the Maritime Labour Convention.

Further, AMSA must not refer the complaint to the ships flag State unless is the flag State has submitted an acceptable plan of action and AMSA is satisfied that the plan will be implemented in an expeditious manner.

Even if the flag State has submitted a plan that AMSA considers will meet the required criteria, AMSA nevertheless retains the discretion to enforce the relevant MLC provision.

The MUA contends Carnival's refusal to engage in collective bargaining and their implicit and explicit threats to crew about contacting or engaging with the MUA is a serious breach of MLC article 3a. This is a fundamental right that applies to all seafarers regardless of their nationality. On this basis we ask AMSA to investigate as a matter of urgency.



Melba's

SAFETY IS
UNION
BUSINESS

SafeWork

INSPECTOR

ITF SEAFARERS AGREEMENT:

The right to collectively bargain

The Maritime Union of Australia is an affiliate of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF). The ITF has a system of seafarers Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) which codify the living and working conditions for seafarers on board a ship flying a Flag of Convenience. ITF Agreements are negotiated and signed by the local affiliate Union on behalf of the crew (in the case the MUA), and the ship owner: Carnival Cruises.

When a ship owner signs an ITF agreement, they undertake to:

- Apply the pay and conditions committed to in the Agreement
- Accurately record working hours
- Provide the ITF Inspectors with a current crew list
- Pay union membership fees to the signatory union or the ITF Special Seafarers' Department
- Pay the ITF Welfare Fund contributions.

Carnival Corporation has nine cruise ship companies. **Carnival Cruises is the only Carnival Corporation entity that does not have ITF Agreements in place.**

Not only are they without ITF agreements, but of the 30 cruise vessels within the 'Carnival Cruises' fleet, 29 have had complaints passed onto them by crew to the ITF across the globe.

The only vessel without complaint is the one that has not been built yet.

These complaints range from wage disparities, urgent health issues not being addressed, not getting sick pay, repatriation issues, bullying, unfair dismissals and working excessively long work hours.

Some of the crew reported working over 112 hours per week.

Generally, upon signing an ITF agreement, crew on board vessels collectively benefit by approximately USD \$120,000 a year.

Carnival crew have a right to a collective voice like every Australian worker. Crew have the right to join their union should they wish to. Crew have the right to collectively bargain for better pay and conditions for themselves, their workmates and their families. These fundamental, inalienable rights must be upheld regardless of where they sail or where they are flagged. The Australian government has a responsibility to ensure crew have the conditions necessary to access and exercise these rights.

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