

MEDIA RELEASE

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Global unions launch campaign in support of Huggies workers following announcement of Sydney factory closure

Global unions that collectively represent more than 70 million workers in 150 countries have launched an international campaign to put pressure on multinational manufacturer Kimberly-Clark to save the jobs of 220 workers at the Huggies factory at Ingleburn, in South Western Sydney.

In a joint statement, UNI and IndustriALL Global Unions condemned the closure, linking the plight of Australian workers to those in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic where Kimberly Clark has also announced factory closures or mass layoffs in recent months.

“Instead of involving a key stakeholder in decision-making, Kimberly Clark has made decisions without this key input which could be catastrophic for the company,” the statement said.

“This plan was made with no worker representative consultation and has put every Kimberly Clark location and every Kimberly Clark worker around the globe in an insecure state never knowing if their facility or job could be next.

“Despite consistently branding itself as a family company, Kimberly Clark is developing a reputation as an anti-union, anti-worker employer.”

CFMEU Manufacturing Division National Assistant Secretary Alex Millar welcomed the intervention of the global union movement.

“Huggies workers at Ingleburn had their fate decided with no consultation, no engagement, and no explanation by a multinational corporation that is increasingly showing complete disregard for the people whose hard work have driven its success,” Mr Millar said.

“When decisions like this are made by corporate leaders thousands of kilometres away from Australia, the best way to fight to overturn them is with a united effort from global unions who represent Kimberly Clark workers around the world.

“Kimberly Clark isn’t just tossing 220 loyal workers on the scrapheap with no consultation, no discussion, and no transparency, they are sending a quality product with a long history of Australian production offshore where quality and safety will come second.

“It’s not too late to overturn this decision, and we’re calling on State and Federal politicians to intervene to keep the manufacture of these important products on Australian soil.

“We’re also urging mums and dads who rely on top quality Huggies products should support this global campaign by contacting Kimberly Clark and demanding this factory closure does not go ahead.”

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UNI and IndustriALL Global Unions strongly condemn Kimberly-Clark's global restructuring plans and their contempt towards engagement with the trade unions representing workers across the globe. The two global unions are launching a campaign against the irresponsible behavior of Kimberly-Clark, which is putting at risk the livelihoods of thousands of workers and families worldwide.

Kimberly-Clark has just announced the closure of a plant in Ingleburn, Australia—where 220 workers, members of the CFMEU will lose their jobs—and a major restructuring at their Northfleet UK plant which will force up to 130 workers into redundancy.

This follows the closing of 3 plants in the USA, 1 plant in Brazil and 1 plant in the Dominican Republic in 2018. The 5 closures and the restructuring have had catastrophic consequences on workers lives, their families and communities as a whole.

These latest Kimberly-Clark decisions have been taken within the framework of a global restructuring plan decided on in early 2018, to close 10 unidentified plants over a 3-year period and dismiss 5500 workers. This plan was made with no worker representative consultation and has put every Kimberly Clark location and every Kimberly Clark worker around the globe in an insecure state never knowing if their facility or job could be next.

Instead of involving a key stakeholder in decision-making, Kimberly-Clark has made decisions without this key input which could be catastrophic for the company.

UNI and IndustriALL Global Unions, together with their affiliates, adopted a joint resolution in July 2018 denouncing the plan as irresponsible and one that would put Kimberly-Clark employees, their families and communities into critical difficulties.

Two weeks ago, a meeting took place in Atlanta between the Kimberly-Clark management and a trade union delegation composed by UNI and IndustriALL Global Unions, and some of their affiliates from different parts of the world. During the meeting, the state of play of the implementation of the global restructuring plan was discussed. During this discussion the Kimberly-Clark management failed to inform the trade union delegation on both the decisions of restructuring the Northfleet plant as well as on the closure of the Ingleburn plant even after the delegation offered for a core group to engage in consultation with appropriate confidentiality agreements.

At this annual meeting, the trade union delegation raised once again with management the critical need for workers' representatives to be properly informed and consulted *before* management decisions. Through this information and consultation, the union representatives should have the basic right to propose alternative solutions or to try to influence management decisions. However, although the Company committed to reexamine how it consults with worker representatives and communicate back with UNI and IndustriALL, it then simply announced the Ingleburn closure and Northfleet restructuring. Our demand was simply dismissed, with the company replying that they would only comply with national laws. What this really means is that Kimberly-Clark intends to do the minimum amount necessary to avoid prosecution.

And in fact, in the Ingleburn situation, Kimberly-Clark did not even comply with applicable law, alerting the union by text two minutes before informing the workers, in clear breach of their consultation obligations with the Union under the collective bargaining agreement.



For a company that wants to present itself as socially responsible, we firmly and loudly say that this is a deplorable response and constitutes an attack on modern labour relations.

Despite consistently branding itself as a family company, Kimberly-Clark is developing a reputation as an anti-union, anti-worker employer.

UNI and IndustriALL Global Unions are once again calling for an open and constructive social dialogue based on a healthy and transparent relationship between employer and employees. We once again offer to have a core group meet with the company on a confidential basis to provide input to the decisions before they are made.

Instead we note that Kimberly-Clark management is holding vital information from employees and their union representatives.

We also cannot accept that consultations take place only once the company has made decisions official, a timing which we see as strategically hostile to union relations.

Taking into account the lack of information and consultation, we hereby decide to strongly stand in solidarity by our colleagues in the UK and in Australia and to support them in fighting back against Kimberly-Clark management's decisions.

In front of such reckless actions and the refusal to engage with our concerns, UNI and IndustriALL Global Unions are launching a global campaign which will start with a first day of action on Thursday 11 April.

In addition to this, we will continue to fight Kimberly-Clark's use of threat of plant closure and mass dismissals to push strong concessions in bargaining and renew our willingness to work in meaningful consultations with Kimberly-Clark on these issues that will benefit workers, communities and the company.