

# City of Port Phillip council questioned over email signature naming former CFMEU member Brian Tee as council chief executive

The transparency of an inner-southeastern council has been called into question after it quietly installed a former CFMEU member as chief executive ahead of council elections.

**Gemma Scerri** Reporter

[Follow](#)

@gemmascerri

3 min read

September 12, 2024 - 4:00PM

Port Phillip Leader

[13 comments](#)

You are watching

**John Setka pops up at...**

[Continue watching](#)

SHARE

An inner-southeastern council has sparked public fears of a silent CFMEU takeover after a former member of the controversial union quietly stepped in as acting chief executive.

The City of Port Phillip council's transparency was brought into question when an email signature revealed a change to the top job without public knowledge or announcement.

In emails seen by the Herald Sun, the email signature named Brian Tee — a former CFMEU member and previous Victorian eastern metropolitan MP — as the chief executive, despite being listed on the council website as the city of growth and development officer.

The top job, according to the Port Phillip council's website, belongs to Chris Carroll.



Chris Carroll is named as the chief executive on the Port Phillip council website.

The emails naming Mr Tee as chief executive — dated September 3 — came one day prior to Mr Carroll attending the monthly council meeting in his capacity in the top job.

A Port Phillip council spokesperson said Mr Carroll had gone on annual leave from September 5, leaving Mr Tee to stand in, however there was no public delegation or announcement of the position change in the September 4 council meeting.

Council Watch's Dean Hurlston said the change "should have been public".

"Normally when a chief executive is going on leave, they would make a recommendation to the council group, who would then publicly make the decision," he said.

"The community would then know who the acting executive was."

# Brian Tee

Chief Executive Officer

M: [REDACTED]

St Kilda Town Hall | [99a Carli](#)

Brian Tee's email signature sparked community concern of a potential silent CFMEU council takeover.

Mr Hurlston said the delegation wouldn't normally happen for a sick day or a short period of time off.

"The chief executive holds statutory lawful obligations that nobody else holds – that's why there is a process of delegation for the position," he said.

"They must be appointed, and if it doesn't happen in an open meeting there would have to be a standing order where he is automatically nominated as the acting chief executive."

## Inner South

Don't miss out on the headlines from Inner South . Followed categories will be added to My News.

Follow

---



Brian Tee, a known former CFMEU member and previous Labor Party shadow minister.

Mayor Heather Cunsolo said the council was not obliged to inform its constituents of a temporary position change.

“There are no governance rules requiring “acting” to be specified in correspondence,” she said.

“The IT system automatically classifies an officer with the title of the role they are working in without assigning it as such.”

Ms Cunsolo said the chief executive had “authority to decide who will replace them for any period under 28 days”, otherwise the decision was made by council.

Ms Cunsolo denied Mr Carroll had left the council or that Mr Tee had permanently replaced him.

“Brian Tee will resume his substantive position when Mr Carroll returns,” she said.

However, Mr Hurlston said “it still feels wrong”.

“Even though what they’ve done is not illegal, it’s still dodgy,” he said.



The CFMEU made threats of a hostile takeover of local councils by way of garbos, gardeners and other blue collar council workers earlier this year.

Community concern arose after the email signature was revealed because Mr Tee had been a [well-known member of the CFMEU](#).

On Thursday, the Herald Sun was told Mr Tee had not been a member of the militant union for “more than a decade”.

The council’s conflict of interest register has no entries from Mr Tee as of March 15, 2024.

In October 2014, the then-CFMEU member was criticised in Victorian Parliament for [failing to note his conflict of interest](#) in relation to the building of Myer Emporium, where he was further required to state a conflict of interest for 16 other state development projects.

Further news articles dated November 2014 stated Mr Tee insisted he would not resign his membership of the militant union on November 7 that year.

Between [2006 and 2014](#), Mr Tee was the state elected member for the eastern metropolitan area, as well as the Labor Party [shadow minister for planning](#) under Daniel Andrews’ leadership, the shadow minister for major projects and infrastructure and the shadow minister for sustainable growth.

The CFMEU has been under fire this year for threats of a [hostile takeover](#) of the council sector – targeting garbos, gardeners and other blue collar council workers, alongside [alleged bikie links](#) within the construction branch of the union.

The [threatened takeover sparked fears](#) of rising rates, slashes of other services to cover cost spikes and a disruption to bin collections by strikes.

The coalition of unions representing more than 85,000 workers [put a halt to work across Victoria](#) in August after the Albanese government moved to put the union into administration.