

RTBU EXPRESS

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VICTORIAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLAUSE MAKES NATIONAL HEADLINES



**Luba
Grigorovitch**
State Secretary

Some RTBU members are aware that last Thursday The Australian published a cartoon by Bill Leak depicting members of our

Union, the RTBU, as rorters who pretend to be victims of Domestic Violence in order to take extra time off work.

This cartoon was not only slanderous towards our members, and insulting to victims of Domestic Violence, it demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of:

- what Domestic Violence Leave is;
- why unions have made it such a priority in our enterprise negotiations;
- and how it works in practice.

The cartoon's cynical portrayal of Domestic Violence was also reflected in an article on the same day which claimed Domestic Violence Leave was contributing to an unnecessary increase on the cost of transport infrastructure.

Consequently I felt we were entitled to a right of reply, and hence I sent the below letter to the editor to The Australian.

I simply wanted to share this with members so that each and every one of you can fully

understand the necessity to fight for varied clauses in each EA.

“Why didn't she just leave?”

It's the question people always ask about women in violent and abusive relationships – usually after the woman in question has been attacked or killed.

The fact this question gets asked at all demonstrates a lack of understanding in the broader community about the nature of violent relationships – because at the heart of domestic violence is the issue of control.

A partner that seeks control, and is prepared to use violence and intimidation to achieve it, probably also has control over the couple's finances, housing arrangements, and possessions.

A partner who's prepared to use violence and intimidation within a relationship is probably just as capable of using threats and emotional blackmail to prevent the other partner from starting afresh.

Breaking away in such a situation can be a logistical, emotional and a legal nightmare. Throw in the needs of children, and the complications in this scenario increase tenfold.

Working your way through this mess takes more than just courage. It also requires time.

Time to find a place to live. Time to see a doctor. Time to set up new bank accounts and establish financial independence. Time to seek legal advice, and attend court hearings. Time to enrol children in new schools. Time to get counselling and professional support. But if you're trying to hold down a job, that could be time you just don't have. In short, time is one major reason why women don't leave – until it is too late.

This is why unions such as the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) have been making Domestic Violence Leave an important item in every single Enterprise Agreement we negotiate on behalf of our members.

We know that access to special leave in times of crisis can help change a person's life. More than that, it can save a person's life. Many employers understand how domestic violence impacts on an employees' wellbeing, and their ability to function at work.

They also understand that an employee going through a personal crisis is more likely to be unproductive or at least distracted. And they understand that giving an employee extra time to deal with their personal situation is a more cost effective solution than forcing that employee to resign, and having to recruit and train someone else.

Melbourne's passenger rail operator Metro is one such company that has recognised the value of putting Family Violence provisions into their workplace agreements.

The recent Metro Infrastructure agreement notes that:
An Employee experiencing family violence will have access to twenty (20) days per year (non-accumulative) of paid special leave for medical appointments, legal proceedings, and other activities related to family violence.

The agreement also stipulates that:

Proof of family violence may be required, and can be in the form of an agreed document issued by the Police Service, a Court, a Doctor, District Nurse, Maternal Health Care Nurse, a Family Violence Support Service or Lawyer.



While the RTBU has its problems with Metro, we recognise that Metro is serious about providing support for workers who are experiencing domestic violence, and we congratulate the company for doing so.

Elements of the Australian media, however, continue to treat the issue of Domestic Violence Leave as a joke.

Most recently, The Australian was critical of the Domestic Violence Leave clause in the RTBU's agreement with Metro on the basis that it would somehow contribute to pushing up the cost of infrastructure ("Unions clip Victorian taxpayers' ticket" 13/10/2016).

The Australian rolled former Liberal Premier and current Chair of Beyondblue Jeff Kennett to back up this spurious argument. Frankly, Mr Kennett should know better.

More concerning, however, was the cartoon accompanying the article in The Australian. The cartoon, by Bill Leak, depicted a male rail worker asking his female partner to hit him over the head with a champagne bottle so he could access paid Domestic Violence Leave. The cartoon reduced Domestic Violence

Leave to nothing more than a cynical roort for blue-collar workers so that they can take extra holidays.

It is tempting to dismiss Mr Leak's cartoon as an isolated provocation from a notorious attention-seeker who thrives on controversy. Sadly, however, it cannot be dismissed so easily.

People who think it's OK to make jokes about domestic violence are drinking from the same misogynist well as those who think it's OK to brag about grabbing women "by the pussy".

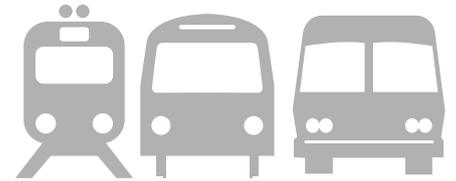
It is these people, secure in their own entitlement and privilege, who sit around chortling about women's rights as "political correctness gone mad", while defiantly upholding their own so-called "right to free speech".

And it is these ignorant, dismissive attitudes which make it even harder for women to come forward and seek help when they are stuck in dangerous and abusive relationships. It is profoundly disappointing that News Ltd,

the publisher of The Australian, allowed Mr Leak's appalling, sexist cheap shot to stain the pages of its flagship national broadsheet.

As a society, we must do more to end the scourge of domestic violence, and the media has a responsibility to treat the issue of domestic violence with the seriousness it deserves. ■

- State Secretary



SAFETY AT FSS



Joe Maisano

Acting Organiser

Last week, two safety meetings were held at Flinders Street Station to address the issues around staff safety and assaults on Barrier

staff.

The first Meeting was conducted at 06:45am and in attendance was Hannah Scott, RTBU Branch Secretary Luba Grigorovitch, Delegates, Station Members and I.

Metro Representatives included Chief Executive Office (CEO) Michael Houghton,

General Manager (GM) Nicolas Sleigh, Customer Service Manager (CSM) Central and other Supervisors.

Many questions were asked from the members to the CEO, however no commitment was given to keep two up staffing at barriers.

The second meeting was scheduled at 1400hrs and was attended by many members and Delegates. Further questions were asked by members to Metro Management for two up on barriers.

Again no commitment was given for two up on barriers by Metro Management, however discussions and conversations have been occurring before and after the

Safety Meetings to keep the two up staffing arrangements. While the RTBU continues to fight for two up staffing arrangements, there is still no commitment from Metro in relation to this.

The RTBU is disappointed that Metro are not taking safety seriously. Many other measures to support staff safety were suggested, such as; personal panic alarms, barrier duress alarms, conflict resolution training and much more.

The RTBU will continue with our fight for staff safety in the work place.

If you have any questions, feel free to give me a call on **0421 122 437**. ■

V/LINE MONTHLY MEETINGS



Darren Galea

Organiser

Early this year the RTBU was able to implement monthly and bi-monthly Delegate meetings in V/Line regional areas.

These meetings are crucial in giving our Delegates the opportunity to raise issues on behalf of the membership.

Last month I was able to attend a monthly Delegates meeting at V/Line Seymour. After the meeting at Seymour, I also visited Shepparton and Echuca.

With the regional managers and other managers in the area involved in these meetings we are able to highlight many pressing issues that are otherwise overseen. These meetings also give the Union officials the opportunity to visit, interact and communicate with our members in all parts of the regions.

The aim of these meetings is for us to get out to the regions every month or bi-monthly to allow members issues to be heard.

If there is anything you wish to raise in the meetings, please contact your local Delegate. ■



Organiser Darren Galea with members at Shepparton Station



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rtbuvic.com.au | (03) 8630 9100

Level 2, 365 Queen Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000 Ertdbu@rtbuvic.com.au F 03 8630 9122





RTBU
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HEALTH & SAFETY

The Rail Industry is rife with dangerous interactions. Your health and safety is paramount and your voice **MUST** be heard.

- Identified a potential hazard?**
- Feel unsafe performing a task?**
- Unsure and need advice?**

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Contact us

rtbuvic.com.au
(03) 8630 9100

Level 2, 365 Queen Street,
Melbourne, VIC 3000

E rtbu@rtbuvic.com.au
F 03 8630 9122

State Secretary
Luba Grigorovitch

Infrastructure Division
Secretary: Jon Saw

Admin & Salaried Division
Secretary: Steven Kozmevski

Rail Operations Division
Organiser: Darren Galea

Admin & Salaried Division
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