



RTBU EXPRESS

Official Newsletter of the Rail Divisions of the RTBU Victorian Branch

April 2025

Operations | Infrastructure | Workshops | Administration



Vik Sharma
Branch Secretary

UNION CAMPAIGN WINS BIG WITH WORKPLACE REFORMS

The return of a majority Labor Government is not just the result of a positive and well-articulated agenda – it's the product of months of hard work by union members, delegates, and families across the country who stood up to defend workers' rights, a feature ultimately recognised as key to addressing the cost of living.

Acting as one, the union movement came together across all states and territories to deliver the impactful *Don't Risk Dutton* campaign which ultimately played a decisive role in shaping the outcome of this election. The more Australians came to know him, the less they liked him – this held true in his home electorate of Dickson that voted decisively.

Through the work of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and Trades Halls across the country, our union played its role in ensuring that workplace reforms that help us deliver for members on the job are entrenched and protected.

From phone banks to workplace conversations, street stalls to social media, union voices carried a clear message: workers could not afford a Dutton Liberal government that had made clear its intentions to undermine workplace rights and conditions.

Since coming to office in 2022, Labor has delivered significant industrial reforms – real changes won through pressure and persistence from the union movement.

These include the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act, stronger protections for workplace delegates, and the closing of loopholes too long exploited by big employers.

Importantly, this workplace agenda wasn't developed in a vacuum. The government has actively consulted with unions to develop reforms that improve wages, safety, bargaining, and job security.

These wins are all the more critical in the current cost-of-living crisis. With real wages finally moving after a decade of stagnation, and gender pay equity now a legislated objective, Labor's reforms are helping lift standards for workers across industries. But without the ongoing work of unions like ours on the job and across the industry, these gains are fragile and under threat.

Beyond their previous track record of attacks on unions, the Liberal Party has crystallised their position as a danger to working people. Their opposition to every major workplace reform tells us exactly where they stand. Their public attacks on flexible work, union powers in the workplace, equal pay, secure jobs, and their record of union-busting, were a sign of what was to come under a Coalition government – and Aussies saw right through it.

The Don't Risk Dutton campaign wasn't about party politics – it was about defending the rights union members



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RTBU
The power of Union

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have fought for decades to win. It worked – but only because of the power of organised workers: delegates who spoke to colleagues, members who shared their stories and families who knocked on doors.

Australia's economic outlook is showing early signs of improvement – and it's no coincidence that this comes alongside stronger workplace provisions. With inflation and interest rates gradually easing, wages across Australia have simultaneously started to climb after years of stagnation. While challenges remain, these developments show that when secure jobs and fair conditions are prioritised, the whole economy is more resilient – because workers **are** the economy.

This election is a victory for working people – but it must not be taken for granted. It's a reminder that politics is never neutral for workers. We must stay vigilant, united, and ready to keep pushing for better. Because when unions organise, workers win.



Vik Sharma
Victorian Branch Secretary



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Darren Galea
Secretary (Rail Operations)

YOUR RIGHTS: DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

The RTBU frequently encounters members who have attended disciplinary meetings alone, sometimes without even knowing what the meeting would be about. Without an independent witness in the room, it is extremely difficult to challenge management's account of what was said and done. Often there are multiple managers able to back each other up, against one member who had no ability to prepare or seek advice beforehand.

Employees are required to follow lawful and reasonable directions from management. However, you are not required to agree to attend meetings about your employment, conduct or performance without being notified of the nature of the meeting, without adequate notice, or without the opportunity to seek representation or support. Employers are required to ensure procedural fairness in conducting disciplinary processes however some enterprise agreements and company policies contain more specific requirements for matters such as minimum notice periods for meetings.

If you are ever called in for a 'quick chat' or informal meeting with management, only to find out your employer actually wanted to discuss your conduct or performance, you have the right to stop the meeting. The RTBU strongly recommends that you exercise your right to do this.

Employers are not allowed to unreasonably refuse your request for a representative. It is also illegal for an employer to take adverse action against a union member who seeks to exercise their workplace right to be represented by their union under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. Be aware that the role of a 'support person' is different to that of a 'union representative'. A support person acts as an observer, while a representative can take a more active role in the meeting such as by intervening on your behalf when an employer acts unreasonably.

The RTBU strongly recommends member's seek assistance with disciplinary matters as early as possible. If you are ever unsure about your rights, don't hesitate to contact your RTBU Delegate or Organiser.



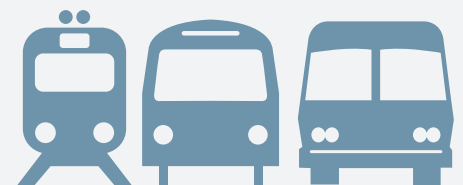
A huge group of delegates have received training this month.



Unions across Victoria met for workers memorial day to remember those who lost their lives at work in the past year. Remember the dead, fight like hell for the living.



RTBU Delegate Brock Boddington has been out helping V/Line members land rosters that work for them.





Joe Dennis
Organiser

ROUNDING UP THE WILD WEST

I have continued to visit sites across the state, covering the Metro, V/Line and ARTC networks.

At each visit I am reminded of the important role our union continues to play in keeping sites safe. While we fight to have good practices implemented, it seems that without regular oversight from the union, many rail companies try to get away with compromised practices which are unacceptable to the union and its members.

We know there will always be a propensity for companies looking to boost their profits to cut back safety, underpay workers, and engage in questionable or even illegal treatment of members.

This sort of behavior continues to be stamped out by the RTBU when it is brought to our attention.

A big focus at the moment is addressing companies seeking to reduce the number of safeworkers or spotters and engaging

the cheapest contractors who quote with a similar cost and corner cutting mentality. In just the past month, I inspected several pieces of plant that were all non-compliant and unsafe to use on the network. With no first aid kits, no fire extinguishers and no service history, basic requirements are not being respected. Their operation has been put out of service until they are made compliant.

We continue to enforce basic provisions for members to ensure employment standards are upheld. This includes adequate breaks, relief, weather provisions, and shift lengths that some try to cut to save a buck.

Allowances including living away, travel, training and site allowances have been found to be unpaid from several contractors. While in some instances members have been met with hostility from management for raising issues, the RTBU has continued to have a strong strike rate getting these issues resolved across the network.

This behavior from companies will not be tolerated and we continue to work and support members every day. Members have the right to attend work and be safe and receive pay for the great jobs they do. All employers have a duty of care to provide a safe work environment and where they fail to do so, the Union will be there to hold these cowboys to account.

If you have any issues relating to safety on your worksite please call me on 0403 863 869.



Members at the Metro Workshop in North Melbourne.

Delegate Bill Seventis is proud of the posters and info on their union notice board

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