

RTBU EXPRESS



The Official Newsletter of the Rail Divisions of the RTBU Victorian Branch
VOL 4 | Issue 12 | 14 Aug 2017



Luba Grigorovitch
State Secretary

Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC)

Australian Rail Track Corporation has continued their assault on workers as they try to slash the working conditions of their skilled and productive workforce.

While negotiations for a new Enterprise Agreement (EA) have been underway for over 18 months, members have stood strong and united in the push for a fair and reasonable agreement.

Despite making profits in excess of \$250 million last financial year, ARTC are attacking wage growth and workplace provisions like leave days and rostering rights.

Ramping up efforts to have ARTC respect the work and efforts of their employees, the RTBU has initiated a strategy of work bans to demonstrate the importance of the work performed. These bans have included bans on overtime, working in inclement weather, work that requires members to live away from home, and respond to urgent call-outs.

As this dispute impacts on the regional industry and the take home wages of the Victorian regional community, I have taken the further step of writing to the Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport as well as the Minister for Employment. These individuals, while flying the anti-union flag of the Coalition Government, have a responsibility to ensure that regional workers and their communities are not left worse off due to greedy attacks on their workforce. Demanding the government respect regional Australians over a multimillion dollar corporation, the RTBU will continue to challenge the hypocrisy that government and management use to attack workers.

While bans to date have caused a significant level of disruption, a tactical 24 hour stoppage

was also called for Monday 7 August where a state wide mass meeting of all ARTC maintenance gangs was held in Melbourne.

This meeting was well attended and gave members from across the state the opportunity to meet together and discuss their Enterprise Agreement and the campaign. At this mass meeting, members discussed a way forward that was subsequently unanimously endorsed.

With the opportunity to discuss their different experiences at work, concerns with management, and the effective impacts of industrial action to date, members left the meeting united and committed to their fight for a fair outcome.

While bans and stoppages follow months of bargaining in good-faith with ARTC, the company have refused to acknowledge the significant outcomes this responsive team has provided the freight network.

Returning an overwhelming vote in support of industrial action, ARTC have sat on their hands. On the table remains an effective wage cut with poorer work/life balance.

Following trends across the country and in the rail industry, companies are spending more and more money to fight unions, to attack pay and conditions and line their pockets and those of their shareholders.

To put this into context, the RTBU's wage claim, as costed by ARTC, equates to only 0.1 per cent of ARTC's profits. The greed must stop and ARTC is on notice.

In making projections about national debt, the Coalition's federal budget assumes that wages growth will almost double to 3.75 per

cent (dreamin') to boost tax receipts. RTBU members understand that in the face of stagnant wages and growing cost of living, profitable employers and governments need to do some lifting to support Australian families.

The RTBU continues to push for an offer that acknowledges profits made and the productivity of ARTC's workforce. As the workforce that keeps freight on rail and responsible for effective bulk haulage interstate and to port, support from across the industry is critical to block the aggressive tactics of management and stop these greedy ideas from arising in other corners of our already lucrative industry.

I congratulate all members united in this fight. With staunch solidarity ARTC members will continue to defy management's efforts to exploit their hard work.

The RTBU will continue to fight and support members working for ARTC until a fair and reasonable agreement is made.

Luba Grigorovitch
- State Secretary





Joe Maisano

Organiser

V/LINE REGIONAL VISIT

On Friday 4 August, Hannah Scott and I did a V/Line trip along the western region.

We attended a Delegates meeting in Ballarat in the morning, with attendance from Delegates Bob Bassett and Jason Mackenzie.

Many issues were raised and resolved at the meeting, with further discussion to be had around some ongoing issues.

The day included visits to many other V/Line stations such as Caroline Springs, Ballan, Bacchus Marsh, Wendouree and Melton.

It was great to get out to the V/Line region to have a chat to and meet some of the staunch RTBU members along this line.

I look forward to my next V/Line visit.

Delegates Meeting Dates – September 2017

- 5 Sept – V/Line Northern – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 5 Sept - Metro Central – Flinders Street – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 6 Sept – Metro Caulfield – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 6 Sept – V/Line Central – 1130 – 1230hrs
- 8 Sept – V/Line South West – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 12 Sept – V/Line Southern Cross – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 12 Sept – Metro Malvern AOs A & D Delegates – 1000 – 1100hrs
- 12 Sept – Metro Hawthorn AOs A & D Delegates – 1200 – 1300hrs
- 13 Sept – Metro Burnley – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 14 Sept - V/Line Shunters - Geelong – 1200 – 1300hrs
- 18 Sept – V/Line Eastern – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 20 Sept - MMAOs B & D Delegates – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 20 Sept - Metro Clifton Hill – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 21 Sept – Drivers Allocation – 1330 – 1500hrs
- 26 Sept - Metro NSS / CCTV – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 27 Sept - Metro Northern – 1100 – 1200hrs
- 28 Sept - Metro, Timetables, Rosters & Signallers – 1000 – 1200hrs



Bryan Evans

Organiser

MURRAY BASIN RAIL PROJECT

While on the surface the Murray Basin Rail Project appears an all-round positive affair, under the surface lies a mess of failures.

Some of the positives pitched to the public include offering more regional jobs, opportunities for industry up-skilling and a freight network in desperate need of attention getting the investment it needs to get more freight on rail. But under an industrial magnifying glass it is already evident that this project has unfortunately fallen a victim to a lack of consultation, process, basic common sense, cost cutting and corner cutting methods. Instead of the rainbows and rose gardens the industry expected from such a long awaited investment, it has become the laughing stock of the industry, and for good reason.

McConnell Dowell, in partnership with Martinus Rail were awarded the contract back in July and it's been a slippery slope since then. The shortcomings are nothing short of catastrophic for members engaged in the project. Amidst a multitude of smaller issues, there are two major flaws in the project.

First are grave health and safety concerns on the job. Due to approximately 400 staff being required, it is generally accepted that many of these will be new-starts with no previous experience working with rail. Reduced experience, combined with McConnell Dowell's proposed roster, which entails working 27, 10 hour days (with a so called pyjama day in the middle) with an 8 day break on a 6 month project working window, apart from being absolutely outrageous, there is a real threat of serious injury or worse.

Despite V/Line's declaration that this is indeed a Construction Project, adding insult to injury, McConnell Dowell/Martinus Joint Venture are looking at paying maintenance rates on their \$440 million construction project.

If this wasn't bad enough, it has been brought to the Union's attention that there are several NSW contractors paying modern award rates on what is meant to be the Victoria State government's regional infrastructure flagship project.

The RTBU will not accept the exploitation of labour with terrible conditions in an unsafe work environment. V/Line needs to think long and hard before backing this anti-worker agenda.

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