

RTBU EXPRESS

The Official Newsletter of the Rail Divisions of the RTBU Victorian Branch
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Vik Sharma

Branch Secretary

RETIRED EMPLOYEES TRAVEL PASS – UPDATE

“It is not a simple pass for our members – it is a badge of honour they must receive in recognition of giving 2 decades of their lives to public transport.”

The fight continues! As members know – the current PTV policy states that if you joined public transport after 1999, you are not entitled to the retirement travel pass. Jeff Kennett’s privatisation agenda took this entitlement away from public transport workers.

We are fighting tooth and nail to restore this entitlement for RTBU members.

“We cannot allow Jeff Kennett to continue to hurt our workers in 2023.”

We have been pushing the Victorian Government for a year to change the current PTV policy so all public transport workers who do 20 overs on the job regardless of your start date are entitled to the travel pass. And we will continue this fight.

At the Labor State Conference last month which was attended by the Prime Minister, Victorian Premier, Minister for Public Transport and various other ministers and MPs along with around 600 delegates and 200 observers, we passed the following resolution:

Long Service Retirement Travel Pass

Workers in the public transport industry have long been entitled to a public transport retirement travel pass upon completion of 20 years’ service when they retire.

Current PTV policy considers employees who commenced work post-privatisation to be ineligible for the retirement travel pass despite their lengthy employment and service to Victorian commuters.

We are still feeling the effects of Kennett’s brutal attacks on workers in the 90s.

That State Conference resolves that all Victorian public transport workers who complete 20 years’ service be afforded the Retirement Travel Pass regardless of when they commenced in the industry, rectifying a glaring inequality created by the privatisation of the public transport system.

Moving Forward

We will keep pushing the Government to change the PTV policy. Additionally, the claim for travel pass is now on all our log of claims for the Enterprise Agreements 2023 bargaining round. Members who have already retired after doing 20 overs and have been knocked back by the PTV will absolutely not be forgotten and are part of this campaign.

Feel free to call me on 0413 363 923 should you want to get more information.

Vik Sharma

Victorian Branch Secretary



RTBU
The power of Union

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Bryan Evans
Organiser



RAIL WORK NEEDS SAFE WORK

In the wake of the allegations levelled against Morson, the RTBU has been hard at work ensuring all impacted members are represented and returned to work.

This process is almost complete, and we are now turning our attention to any outstanding wages owed from the final weeks prior to Morson being "suspended" from being utilised in the industry.

If you have outstanding wages owed from the final weeks, members are advised that we will need copies of;

- Your traffic bookings for the period of unpaid work
- Your time sheet for the period of unpaid work
- Any supporting evidence such as SMS's or other correspondence from the company relating to the period in question.

- Your full name and contact details.

These should be emailed to rtbu@rtbuvic.com.au.

One thing has been clear throughout both the Morson EA process and the subsequent investigations into Morson's conduct; much of what has occurred is due to a toxic culture that is prevalent in safeworking where workers feel they must do anything the boss tells them to do or risk not continuing to get work. THIS MUST NOT CONTINUE.

The RTBU has a proud history of setting industry standards on the rails, and within safeworking with our agreements with TPA, Activate, Skilled and the pending agreement with Tenex (about to go to vote).

The RTBU is now in constructive conversations with Jim Talbot from Safeworking Solutions about formalising a union agreement post July this year, which would see all safeworking

companies with a current RTBU EA.

Safeworkers must be able to speak up without fear of jeopardising wages, conditions and safety. It is in every members' interest to contact the union wherever and whenever these practices occur. Being represented and acting as a collective is the strongest remedy against toxic cultures where corruption reigns unchecked.

Don't risk your qualifications, your wages and your conditions in non-union hands.

There has never been a more important time for every safeworker to be a member of the RTBU.



UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

In any EA bargaining round it is essential to ensure your details are up to date with the RTBU. Don't miss important updates or your powers as an RTBU member.

Check your membership is financial and your postal address is up-to-date.

Changed details? Moved house? Contact us today!

8630 9100 | support@rtbuvic.com.au | rtbuvic.com.au/update-your-details/



Contact us

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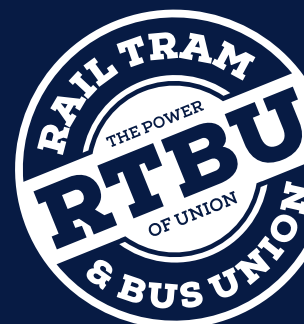
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Darren Galea

Secretary Rail Operations Division

CHANGES TO WORKCOVER

The Victorian Government is making structural changes to the WorkCover scheme citing increased costs and long-term efficacy and sustainability of the program, but the RTBU holds concerns with the potential impact on members in need.

Since 2010 the number of WorkCover claims has tripled, workers are staying on the scheme for longer and premiums for business are at an all-time low. The current proposal rests on 4 pillars of reform outlined below.

Proudly, Victoria has the strongest scheme in Australia and even across the world. This is not something that Australian unions will allow to be watered down easily.

In the 2021/22 financial year 2.9% of Victorian workers had time off from work due to a work-related injury. Mental health claims make up 17.13% of the total, up from 14.88% the year before and on track to become 1/3 of all claims by the end of the decade. Tragically, only 40% of workers with a mental injury return to work within 6 months. Within the same period 73% of workers with physical injury return to work. More must be done.

While it is easy to recognise that the scheme needs modernisation and employers should be asked to pay their share, the RTBU is concerned about the scope of claims covered under the proposal and a lack of details on how assessments will be conducted.

Eligibility to continue to receive payments after 130 weeks will be changed.

The current requirement they be incapacitated for all work for the foreseeable future will remain in place. In addition, they will now need to have a Whole Person Impairment (WPI) of more than 20% (an additional test). If a worker's injury has not

stabilised at 130 weeks, they may continue to be eligible to receive payments if an Independent Medical Examiner (IME) finds that they are likely to have a permanent injury.

The RTBU is concerned that the WPI assessment guides are inflexible and give more weight to certain types of injury over others and are highly subjective with respect to mental health injuries and don't take into consideration individual circumstances such as capacity for re-training or language barriers. Thus far the government has not been able to quantify the number of workers that will be impacted by this change in assessment and how many future workers will be booted off the scheme after 130 weeks.

Initial eligibility for WorkCover will be changed in relation to mental health injuries.

To receive compensation, work will need to be the predominant cause of the injury (as opposed to "a significant contributing factor" as applies to physical injuries. Mental health claims for things like stress, anxiety, overwork and burnout will no longer be eligible for compensation, however mental injuries arising from workplace harassment, bullying and traumatic events will.

The RTBU is concerned with the use of different tests including a mental health test not currently used elsewhere in Australia. Further, difficulties in accessing specialist medical care to differentiate between types and levels of mental health injury means workers may trigger long wait times to obtain a certificate that satisfies the eligibility criteria.

The exclusion of particular mental health injuries also means WorkSafe will no longer investigate complaints from workers injured by workplace hazards such as overwork and burnout and to date we have not been told how many workers stand to be impacted by this change.

The government will create a new body provisionally entitled 'Return to Work Victoria'. This is a structural change in the way support is provided and how. RTW Victoria will pay medical and like expenses for all workers who lodge a claim for WorkCover for up to 13 weeks, regardless of whether their WorkCover claim is accepted. RTW Victoria will also assist in rehabilitation, and re-training where possible with a view to getting Victorians off the scheme and back to work.

The RTBU is broadly supportive of this change however there are several unknowns regarding the structure, remit and statutory powers of the body for which we are seeking further information.

Premiums will rise to an average of 1.8% of payroll, an increase of 42% on current average premiums for employers. Given premiums have been steadily decreasing over the last 20 years and employers should be encouraged to do more to help prevent workplace injuries before they happen the RTBU is supportive of this measure and firmly believes further increases should be sought to fund a broader scope of injuries supported by the scheme. Shortfalls in revenue should be made up by increasing premiums, not cutting access or assistance.

Overall there remains to be further information provided by government on the significance and detail of changes and the RTBU is continuing to advocate for changes that do not potentially jeopardise the livelihoods of members.

Should you have any queries relating to these changes, please contact your organiser or the office on 8630 9100.





Sally Van Bragt
Organiser

WOMEN'S MARCH ON PARLIAMENT

Thursday 22 June 2023 saw 11 strong RTBU women march on Parliament along side 54 other sisters from various unions around the state.

Why?

To let the state government know the ongoing mis-use of Non-Disclosure Agreements has to stop now!

Issues with NDA's are not restricted to a specific gender. However, statistics indicate that 1 in 3 women in Australia are subjected to sexual harassment and gendered violence in the workplace. Most of these women will never be able to tell you about their experience or warn

others of the danger in their workplace thanks to employers making non-disclosure agreements a standard part of any settlement in these matters.

NDA's are effectively gag orders, preventing victim-survivors from being able to speak to anyone about their experiences. Not even their family, union officials or lawyers; whilst the perpetrators are able to continue on with minimal to no consequences for their actions.

In March 2021 the Victorian Government formed the Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment to develop reforms that will better prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the workplace. That taskforce made 26

recommendations, of these, the Victorian State Government agreed to implement 12. To date, only one recommendation has been fully implemented, with the other 11 still in progress, including the ban on NDA's. This is not good enough!

RTBUWomen proudly stand along side the Victorian Trades Hall Council and all of our union sisters to ensure the government stop sitting on their hands and start actioning these recommendations instead of talking about it.

For more info or to discuss further, feel free to contact me on 0429 150 906.



Contact us

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