

# RTBU EXPRESS

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

## INDUSTRIAL ACTION TO HIT METRO TRAINS

To advance claims for the Metro Operations EA, the RTBU has notified the company of industrial action to take place between 10am and 2pm on Friday 6 October and Wednesday 11 October 2023 for all non-driving grades. Train driving grades are not included in this action at this stage.

This follows a rock-solid vote outcome that saw an overwhelming number of members voting in favour of a stoppage.

Management ought to be alarmed, and for the other companies across the industry who have been dragging their heels on negotiations, they should understand RTBU members mean business.

At time of writing, driving grade representatives have requested that train drivers be excluded from industrial action at this stage, however I continue to work with and support officials

from all divisions to ensure we collaboratively achieve the best outcome for all members.

In the face of the tunnel opening, new ticketing system, automation and other major projects, now is our moment to push as a united front, for the security, conditions and wages members deserve in the current environment.

The emboldened platform gives the RTBU every reason to demand each claim is addressed. Where Metro tries to divide us, only unity will deliver the result of maximum value for members.

Thanks to the hard work of our army of members, activists and delegates working the network every day to ensure this outcome was possible. Now it's time to raise the temperature while we put in the overtime to bargain day and night to get a resolution for members.

In related news, the Metro Infrastructure agreement has progressed to drafting, and Yarra Trams Rolling Stock and Infrastructure EAs have voted to take industrial action. With V/Line and Yarra Trams Operations EAs under negotiation, the months ahead are due to see the RTBU on a fighting footing across all agreements.

Working as a team with strong support from members across all networks, the RTBU will continue to fight for the best possible EA for all members. This is your union, these are your EAs.

**Vik Sharma**  
Victorian Branch Secretary



**RTBU**  
The power of Union

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**David Paton**

Organiser

## VALE NIKOLCE KANTAROVSKI



The RTBU mourns the loss of our comrade Nikolce (Nick) Kantarovski.

The RTBU was deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Nick Kantarovski, a beloved RTBU member, colleague and friend to all who knew him.

Nick was an integral piece of the fabric that makes up the tapestry that is Flinders Street Station.

Nick arrived in Australia at the age of 19 after migrating from Macedonia, accompanied by his wife.

He immediately began his rail career helping to lay the track from Melbourne to Geelong.

A 46-year career in rail saw Nick work at a variety of Stations before finding his home at Flinders Street.

Nick (or Nostradamus as he was affectionately known) was known by staff to be “cheeky”, quick witted and always down for a joke.

A devoted family man, we extend our deepest sympathies to Nick’s Wife, children and grandchildren.

Nick will be missed by all of his extended rail family.

## RETIRED FROM THE JOB, NOT THE STRUGGLE

### Retired Members Profile

### Jean “John” Thelemaque

#### When did you work?

I worked a total of 48 years and 3 months in the railways. I started in September 1973 as a supernumerary junior Station Assistant in the then Victorian Railway. I was made permanent in 1975 and held a number of positions within Vic Railway. At Metro Trains I worked as a Manager Operations Network Signallers and Interface Operations Manager (Project). I finished my railway career as a Fault Centre Manager at V/ Line, retiring in 2021

#### Roles within the Union:

I became a member of the Australian Railways Union (ARU) as soon as I joined the railways in September 1973. The ARU subsequently amalgamated to become the Public Transport Union (PTU) in 1993 and known as the RTBU since 1998.

I first became a delegate in the PTU/RTBU in 1997, when I was elected as the union’s Sub Section Secretary for Metrol (Network Train Control). I remained in that position until 2013.

I also acted as Secretary for Rail Operations for about two years under RTBU State Secretary Trevor Dobbyn. It was a challenging role, but I learned quite a bit during my time there.

#### Best battles:

There were many disputes and battles during my time on the railways. One that comes to mind is the protection of the working conditions for the Train Controller group at Metrol, including Area Controllers (TC4s), Fleet Controllers, Senior Train Controllers and others.

This was a long-drawn dispute with Public Transport Corporation’s management which was ultimately won by RTBU’s Metrol Sub Section after going to the Arbitration Commission (now the Fair Work Commission). In the end it was a good outcome for our members.

Another big battle for our union was the privatisation of Victoria’s rail network in 1999 by Jeff Kennett’s Victorian Liberal Government. The RTBU had to make sure that the entitlements of the members were protected and not destroyed by privatisation, such as long service leave, sick leave and the recognition years of service, free travel etc.

There were also a number of issues for our members when Metro Trains took over the private rail franchise from Connex in 2009. Metro had their own ideas and we had ours. In the end it was resolved to our satisfaction.

#### Advice to Delegates

Always remember that you are there to represent the RTBU members of your section and keep them informed by having a monthly meeting about what is happening in your section and general union business.

Speaking from experience, never agree with management on any important and serious issues that could have an impact in your area without consulting with members of your section on it first. These issues could include work conditions, additional work requirements etc. Always make time to represent your members at disciplinary meetings and strive for the best outcome for them.

Always remember the union is bigger than the individual.



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