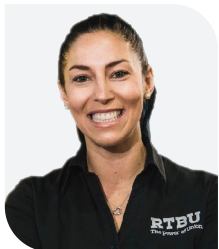


RTBU EXPRESS

The Official Newsletter of the Rail Divisions of the RTBU Victorian Branch
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Luba Grigorovitch

State Secretary

SRL BUSINESS CASE QUESTIONED OVER DRIVERLESS TECHNOLOGY

Members would be no doubt aware of the Victorian government's plans for the Suburban Rail Loop or 'SRL' project to connect the different suburbs of Melbourne without a need for commuters to rely on coming into the CBD just to catch the next connecting train back out again.

With forecasts suggesting that the first stage of the project will be finished and operational by as soon as 2032, last week the government blindsided the union and employers across the network with their announcement of the SRL business case. While the document asserts that the project will reap a benefit of \$1.00 to \$1.40 for every dollar spent, the industry also learned

that these trains would be driverless and fully automated.

While the RTBU is supportive of investment into the network and the injection of new services, we remain vigilant and ready to bargain for rewarding work and safe workplaces that support the skills and jobs of our Members.

With automation comes a number of risks that train drivers help to reduce. These include the checking of platforms for stuck passengers before departure, reporting faults and breakdowns, making announcements, assisting passengers with mobility issues, and being able

to adapt to meet the needs of changing network conditions.

Given the announcement, the RTBU is calling on the government to commit to ensuring qualified drivers are utilised in the running of these flagship services. I have reached out to the Locomotive Division and reiterated the Branches support on this important issue as we work together in an endeavour to thwart these attacks.

SOLIDARITY WITH KOREAN METRO WORKERS

Korean metro workers across six cities have come together to demand better from their government.

As opposed to government responses to the pandemic in Victoria where support payments have been made and services have been maintained to support essential workers, in South Korea the government has turned the opposite direction by reducing services and refusing to support and compensate operators.

While it is absurd to think that private multinational profit driven businesses such as Metro should be propped up and given a risk free ticket to make money out of our state owned network, the impacts of going the other way have been seen and felt by metro workers in Korea and

elsewhere. Instead, this should stand as a note to government that essential services should never have been privatised in the first place.

All around the world, public transport workers have kept society running throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring other essential workers like nurses, doctors and supermarket employees can continue to support our communities. When we learned of the struggles of Korean unionists and international calls for solidarity, we shared with them our experiences and sent a message of solidarity through our important affiliations with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

Public transport will play a critical role in our recovery as we emerge from the depths of this

pandemic both providing affordable transport options and helping reduce the number of cars on our roads, tackling issues of congestion and carbon emissions.

Now more than ever we must stand shoulder to shoulder with one another, share information and support the wider community of rail and public transport workers!

Luba Grigorovitch

State Secretary





Joe Dennis

Organiser

AROUND THE TRAPS

V/Line fault centre has been an ongoing issue this year. In the current Asset enterprise agreement, all work is to be offered to V/Line staff before engaging contractors but the fault centre has engaged contractors to fill full-time vacancies without following the agreement.

The union has placed this in dispute with V/line and has worked with Delegates to meet with V/Line over the issue. As a result 4 new positions will now be opened and eventually filled by full-time V/Line employees. This is a win for all Members, more jobs for full timers and an important reminder of the importance of being vigilant to ensure full-time jobs are retained and respected.

Check your payslips... **V/Line payroll issues** continue. Members have missed out on site allowances, jump ups and overtime payments. The RTBU has been in discussions with V/Line and have had payments made to Members. We will continue to make V/Line aware of the ongoing issues with payroll and will continue to seek a solution to making sure Members are paid for the work they do without the need for such measures.

Project sites throughout Victoria have continued during the lockdown. Members have called regarding the lack of toilets and meal rooms on several new sites. Several sites have also had Members' conduct works in the rain,

putting the safety of themselves and others at risk of injury. I will continue to visit sites and make sure that all Members are safe and have the facilities they need.

Both **ARTC** and **Programmed Skilled** have enterprise agreements coming to an end. The RTBU will soon be speaking with Members from both companies to complete a log of claims to present at the negotiations. This is a chance for all Members to have a say on what they would like addressed in the negotiations. These agreements will set the conditions for Members for the coming years. I look forward to speaking with you all and working with you to negotiate a new agreement for you all.



Vik Sharma

Industrial Officer / Organiser

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENT

We receive a lot of enquiries from the RTBU members about their rights to ask for flexible working arrangement. Below are some key features you need to know about this framework.

Fair Work Act 2009 (the Act) recognises the importance of flexibility in the contemporary working world. This flexibility is critical to maintaining a healthy work life balance especially when a worker's personal circumstances are challenging and will leave them severely impacted if there were no flexibility.

Section 65 of the Act in the circumstances listed below gives you the right to ask for changes in your current working arrangements. Examples of changes in working arrangements may include changes in hours of work, changes in patterns of work and changes in location of work etc.

The following are the circumstances:

1. the employee is the parent, or has responsibility for the care, of a child who is of school age or younger;
2. the employee is a carer (within the meaning of the Carer Recognition Act 2010);
3. the employee has a disability;
4. the employee is 55 or older;
5. the employee is experiencing violence from a member of the employee's family;
6. the employee provides care or support to a member of the employee's immediate family, or a member of the employee's household, who requires care or support because the member is experiencing violence from the member's family.

Further, the employee must have completed 12 months of continuous service with the employer and the request must be made in writing.

The employer must give the employee a written response to the request within 21 days, stating whether the employer grants or refuses the request. If refusing, they must include details of the reasons for the refusal.

The employer may refuse the request only on 'reasonable business grounds.' The Act provides some guidance on what can be deemed as 'reasonable business grounds.' However, this is often the most contentious part of this framework.

If you need more information, seek flexibility in your current working arrangement or if you believe that your request has been refused unfairly on the so called 'reasonable business grounds', feel free to contact us.

For all your local issues, contact your local delegate. Alternatively, feel free to contact me on **0413 363 923** or

email: vik.sharma@rtbuvic.com.au.



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Vik Sharma





Darren Galea

Organiser

PACIFIC NATIONAL

Members may be aware that the RTBU have raised serious concerns around major changes regarding Category One, Two and Three Medicals.

Members across the country (in all workgroups) have been alarmed at the new testing regime that has come into play since Pacific National changed providers from Sonic Health to Jobfit Health.

The RTBU obviously supports testing that reflects the challenges that PN Employees face in their day-to-day duties, and any medical advice that ensures the mental and physical health and wellbeing of the Membership.

We will not however stand idly by when changes (that have not been consulted on) are rolled out to the detriment and distress of the Members, potentially impacting on their ability to continue carrying out their specific classification duties.

On Wednesday 4 August, after meeting with PN, the RTBU issued a letter requesting that

these harsh muscular skeletal/function testing methods revert to the status quo, an updated employee memo be re-issued with the facts, and that the original memo be retracted. The RTBU gave PN until the COB on Friday 6 August to respond.

Without even acknowledging their delay, on Monday 9 August, Pacific National responded to the RTBU and issued a new Memo which includes minor changes to the existing document.

The RTBU is still seeking the following from Pacific National surrounding the changes to the testing:

- Pacific National provide a copy of the list of testing requirements that it required of Sonic, and a list of testing requirements it has asked of Jobfit.
- A commitment that the Status Quo remains while PN conducts its urgent investigation.
- A commitment that any RTBU Member will

not have to do testing that goes above what is the normal expectation for the duties that they carry out in their everyday job.

- Pacific National review Jobfit's consent form with Jobfit so as to match actual requirements, rather than giving Jobfit unnecessary access to personal medical records.

Conversations continue between Pacific National and the Rail Tram and Bus Union.

The RTBU remains committed to fighting for Members' rights. If you don't fight, you lose!



Photos without masks taken pre restrictions



Victor Moore

Senior Branch Vice-President

METRO RESTRUCTURE UPDATE

In response to issues raised by RTBU Station Staff Members, Metro management sent out a series of documents late last week detailing a series of responses to concerns raised about proposed rosters and a new proposed restructure of stations.

The process is turning out to be quite an exercise with management seeking to perform their own version of the Olympics by high jumping over issues and performing a number of gymnastic maneuvers to avoid giving any meaningful responses.

Station Staff are left scratching their heads as management's responses raise more issues than they answer – which is clear picture of where Metro are up to at the moment.

It is now nearly 5 months since Metro rolled the dice seeking to intimidate members with threats of forced redundancies and their approach continues to confuse and confound many.

While the current COVID lockdowns cause a number of organising and site visit restrictions, the campaign against Metro's attempts to cutdown on SM classifications and to introduce a series of ramshackle rosters continues unabated.

Regular forums held online via Teams are occurring both for RTBU Station Delegates and Station Staff with consistent attendance from across the stations, continue to provide updates, discuss tactics and points of concern.

Everyone gets a say and unlike management's

response, everyone is listened too. We all support one another online and on the job regardless of grade, classification, or part-time/full-time status

In our recent online meetings Members have requested that we respond to management's FAQ documents in addition to several letters that the RTBU has recently been forwarded, regarding members' concerns with the allocation process for positions, Metro's EOI process and the structures that management are seeking to put in place.





Bryan Evans
Industrial Officer / Organiser

COMENG RETIREMENT

The best way to win a dispute is to prevent it.

The retirement of a fleet is no small matter, and we have long known about the upcoming retirement of the Comeng Fleet with the first 33 scheduled to be taken off the network by June 2022 due to a lack of available stabling.

This will have significant implications particularly for members who work in rolling stock maintenance, and even more those who work at Westall Workshops.

After meeting with Metro Trains Melbourne to discuss their plan for the Comeng retirement, the long term ramifications of the retirement became increasingly obvious to the RTBU.

The RTBU never wants to see job losses in our industry however we recognise that some members may see this as advantageous and have been waiting for a package for some time. However, the RTBU is an all-grades union and represents all classifications and trades.

Metro only offered voluntary redundancy packages at to Car Builders, Assistants, Train Examiners, Stores and Admin Staff, presenting what I can only describe as a bare bones plan with no consideration for future requirements.

Notably that the proposed plan:

- Did not cater for future industry requirements
- Did not offer EOIs to Electrical and Mechanical members
- Did not take into consideration impacts of morale on STEs having been a newly formed and trained position
- Deliver any training commitments for the existing Car Builders and STEs
- Deliver any commitments that would ensure a training plan that extended into the next Franchise

Several meetings were held with the RTBU raising the above concerns which resulted in an extension of the consultation period.

At the end of the consultation period, the the RTBU was told there would be no change to Metro's plan. The matter was subsequently placed into dispute.

Several more "robust and colourful discussions" were held with MTM in the following weeks, debating the best way to consider the above issues in the Comeng retirement plan. The RTBU and MTM agreed on incorporating several commitments into the plan which largely dealt with our concerns.

The future overall apprenticeships open to the incumbent workforce of Car Builders, STEs, and Stores personnel, will be an indicative 50% of the overall apprentice intake subject to their meeting MTM's selection criteria.

As STEs are appointed to apprenticeship positions their role will be backfilled through junior STE recruitment as business requirements arise. These junior STEs are also eligible for future apprenticeships subject to meeting selection criteria which includes the attainment of Cert II in Engineering.

The number of STEs "post Comeng retirement" will be upheld and maintained.

Despite the fact that MTM have maintained that EOIs will not be made available to Electrical and Mechanical grades, there will be approximately 12 voluntary redundancies made available to the Electrical and Mechanical grades.

These conditions will be maintained till a minimum of June 30, 2025

This modified plan delivers far better outcomes to Railway workers across Rolling Stock and demonstrates a commitment to the current workforce that they will be offered apprenticeships and security for the STE role that it shall be backfilled and recruited for.

This will also allow for more apprenticeships to be made available, training existing employees to replace electrical and mechanical members who express an interest in a package and would otherwise retire. The RTBU is of the firm belief that this plan would be beneficial for our industry and subsequently our Members.

The second stage of the process has now begun with Metro releasing the expressions of interest to the affected members for packages and relocations across the entire network. Unfortunately, in typical fashion they opted to place undue pressure on members by reiterating to them verbally that they must populate the EOI and list their preferred alternative depots.

THIS IS NOT HOW EOIs WORK!

Members are advised **TO NOT FILL OUT THE EOI** unless they are expressly interested in a package or working at another location.

Ultimately, DO NOT FILL OUT PAPERWORK THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN A PACKAGE IF YOU ARE NOT.

The RTBU may well be using information provided by Members as future problems arise and ensuring that its accurate is of paramount importance.

This advice does obviously not apply to those who work at Westall, who by far have got the rough end of the stick here, who have no other options but to relocate to another depot. The RTBU will be ensuring that these members are treated fairly and given as many opportunities as possible.

The Comeng retirement plan has only just began and as always the RTBU will be seeking the best outcomes for its members over the long term, preventing as many future disputes as we can by making sure the process is correct and FAIR.



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