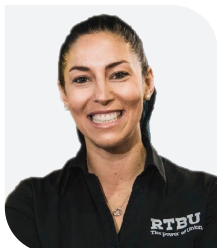


RTBU EXPRESS

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

State Secretary

A MESSAGE FROM THE BRANCH SECRETARY

Dear Members,

I emailed you each directly, however I thought I would put this in RTBU Express in case you missed this announcement.

I am writing to inform you that after 12 years of representing RTBU Members, I am resigning from the position as Branch Secretary with effect from 22 April 2022 to run for the Labor Party at the Victorian State election in November.

Having tendered my resignation officially at yesterday's RTBU Branch Executive meeting, the Executive made the decision to appoint Vik Sharma as Branch Secretary effective 23 April. This decision was made with the objective of providing members with continuity, stability and security in the important work that lies ahead in this critical time across our industry.

Recent years have seen our Union go from strength to strength and ensure that public transport is an industry that continues to grow whilst RTBU Officials deliver quality support to Members. To maintain and uphold this standard and ensure your union can smoothly transition, Vik Sharma will hit the ground running. I will be spending the coming weeks supporting Vik's move from the role of Organiser to Branch Secretary through a comprehensive handover. We have an action-packed diary between now and my finishing date.

For those of you that don't know Vik, he started on-the-job working as an Authorised Officer in 2014 and has since worked for the RTBU as an Industrial Officer and Organiser. He has represented hundreds of members, participated in numerous critical campaigns, and understands deeply the RTBU's culture, values and fighting spirit. Knowing his work ethic, his proven commitment to RTBU Members and his attention to detail, I have every confidence in Vik's capacity to take on the role of Branch Secretary.

It has been a great honour and privilege to have served you, the Members of the RTBU, over the past 12 years. Together we have fought and won many battles. Over this time, I have worked hand-in-hand with many incredible Members, Delegates and Officials.

Proudly we have seen the union grow and modernise, improve representation and services, and establish sound standards of governance and transparency for rank & file Members, all in the midst of the most significant changes our industry has seen since privatisation.

The battles we have fought as a union have been diverse, challenging and have helped us grow stronger as a collective, truly engaging every corner of the network and our membership. During my time as Branch Secretary:

We stopped V/Line trains at Southern Cross Station to demand justice against indiscriminate sackings

We brought the network to a standstill through our combined forces across Yarra Trams and Metro Trains standing firm against the attacks from employers and the Government

We stood with train drivers fighting against Metro's depot driving attacks and provided strong resistance to rail franchising, privatisation, and deteriorating safety standards across the network

We put V/Line in their place when they sought to vary their enterprise agreement to undermine the wages and conditions of train drivers and broader job security across the network

We fought to save the longstanding Ballarat Workshops from closure

We delivered the 36-hour work week to hundreds of rail employees across workshops and infrastructure

Most recently, the RTBU has worked tirelessly to successfully assist Members to navigate through COVID lockdowns while ensuring transport continued to operate. We focused our efforts on keeping Members employed and safe throughout the pandemic while also delivering pay rises unheard of in most other industries. Nobody saw the true scale of disruption that was to come when the pandemic first landed in Australia, but working across all levels of Government, with the Department and individual companies, in the face of rock bottom patronage figures, we have been able to provide security for Members when it mattered most. During this time, it was you – the Members – who were at the forefront of the general public, keeping the network running – thank you!

While I will continue my advocacy for workers if I am elected to the Victorian parliament, I will remain a Member of the RTBU, making my office available to meet with RTBU Members and local constituents in the electorate of Kororoit. I will work fiercely for you into the future, ensuring our union has a strong voice on Spring Street. We will pursue further opportunities to collaborate and ensure RTBU Members have an advocate and direct voice to Government.

Thank you for all your support over the years. While the decision to move on has been difficult, I will never forget where I came from. I now ask you all to support Vik Sharma in this challenging role going forward.

I will be visiting many work sites between now and my finishing date of April 22, and I look forward to having a chat with you then. Being your Branch Secretary has been my greatest honour – thank you for believing in me and supporting me over the many years.

Luba Grigorovitch

State Secretary





Vik Sharma

Industrial Officer/
Organiser

READY FOR 2022

I would like to wish everyone a happy New Year. Let's hope this year will be better than the last two and let's also hope that very soon COVID moves from a pandemic to an endemic. Over the last couple of years, there has been a heightened sense of anxiety and pressure. I would like to thank all the members for their hard work to keep public transport moving. RTBU members risked their lives to keep transport going, but was their work rewarded and appreciated by the companies – I hardly think so.

Year 2022 started with the onset of widespread Omicron transmission. The companies have failed to do enough to protect workers from the virus. They have failed to adequately consult the works, HSRs and delegates to understand the safety challenges they face in the workplaces.

We will continue to push for periodic risk assessments to keep the workplaces safe. We have demanded that N95 masks and RAT kits be made available at all workplaces.

V/Line is pushing to replace full time jobs with part time jobs in many frontline roles. Shame! Rail industry has a proud history of permanent full-time careers – jobs for life. The current management wants to reduce it to a part-time industry with no proper rosters, no set hours etc. This is completely unacceptable. We have made it very clear to V/Line management that we will fight this all the way. We are in discussions with different work groups around the network and are exploring all avenues to stop this madness.

Metro is also suffering from excessive staff shortage. There are dozens of vacant roles

which have not been filled for a long time. After constant pressure from the ground, management has started advertising for some roles, but it is nowhere near enough. This puts extra pressure on the staff to undertake multiple people's work and can affect their mental health. Also, it makes it very hard for staff to take leave because the company does not have enough coverage. We will continue the fight to have all vacancies filled.

If you wish to talk about any workplace issues, please call me on **0413 363 923** or email **vik.sharma@rtbuvic.com.au**.

Stay united and stay strong!



Joe Dennis

Organiser

SUMMER ON SITE

In the last few weeks, I have hit the road and have been busy visiting as many sites as possible.

I have been attending pre starts on projects and numerous depots to speak to members and see if there are any issues that need attention.

Several members have raised concerns regarding working through the hot weather in the regions.

Some members are subject to working in 40 degrees and above.

The temperature on tracks can exceed 50 degrees, compounded when Members are also wearing pants, long sleeve shirts, hardhats and other PPE.

Every member should know that their safety is paramount, which includes inclement weather. Always look after yourself when working in hot conditions.

Members should be allowed to take breaks as needed and ensure they are staying hydrated.

I recommend that Members stay out of the sun

during the hottest part of the day when possible, and always look out for your mates. Let's make sure everyone goes home safe.

If you have any issues or want to arrange a prestart or site visit, please call me on **0403 863 869**.



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Infrastructure Division

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Admin & Salaried Division

Secretary: Steven Kozmevski

Rail Operations Division

Secretary: Darren Galea

Workshops Division

Secretary: Paul Jumpertz

Infrastructure, Workshops & Labour Hire

Organiser: Bryan Evans

Organiser: Joe Dennis

Industrial Officer

Amanda Swayn

Branch Divisional Organiser Admin/Rail Operations

Vik Sharma



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/RTBUvic/





Amanda Swayn

Industrial Officer

HAVE YOU GOT 5 MINUTES?

What are my rights regarding meetings?

All too often we speak to members who have attended meetings alone, in relation to their performance or conduct. Without an independent witness in the room, there is little chance of challenging the information obtained – the evidence of two or even three management representatives versus one ambushed member, is incredibly hard to challenge.

Whilst as employees, you are required to follow lawful and reasonable directions, 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.

If you do agree to sit down with management alone, only to find out the basis of the discussion is your conduct or performance, you are entitled to say that “I would like reschedule this meeting so that my union representative can be present”.

Employers are not allowed to unreasonably refuse your request for representation. It is also illegal for an employer to take adverse action against a union member who seeks ‘to be

represented by their Union under the Fair Work Act 2009.

It is vital that you ask for a ‘Union representative’, as employers are not required to offer you one. The role of a ‘support person’ is different to that of a ‘union representative’. A support person acts as an observer, where as the role of a representative is much broader.

You need to also be aware that it is your choice who the representative is. Your manager cannot allocate or pick a representative for you. Even if your managers tell you the meeting is informal, or a ‘quick chat’ you still have the right to representation.

The right not to sign anything:

An employer cannot compel employees to sign any documents including counselling, warning, performance improvement plans or disciplinary forms, howsoever they have been described.

The Union recommends to members not to sign any document unless:

- They agree with the entire contents including all facts detailed in the document and the outcome(s);

- They understand the full consequences of signing the document;
- They receive their own copy; and
- If they do not agree or understand, they have been given a reasonable opportunity to obtain advice.

Where a member feels obliged to sign a document but disagree with the facts, the outcome or both, they should write, “I have read the document, but I do not agree with its contents”.

Members should never sign a document just to say that they were present.

If in doubt, do not sign.

If you have suspicions about the reasons for the meeting or are being asked to sign a document you are concerned about, contact your RTBU Delegate or Organiser as soon as possible.



Darren Galea

Organiser

OUT & ABOUT

Welcome to 2022 and happy New Year! Last year presented many new challenges for all of us. I am proud that we have been able to provide a strong response in our approach to the pandemic over the past two years. I am looking forward to being able to get back to in person meetings and representations that have not been permitted throughout the course of the pandemic.

Assuming COVID-19 restrictions will allow me to do so, I am determined to see as many Members face to face in 2022 as possible. Additionally, many of our meetings on the job are returning to in person, which will greatly strengthen the union’s ability to hear from Delegates and

Members directly.

This year I am focused on increasing the number of Delegates, Health and Safety Representatives, Women’s Advocates and Activists across the network, especially in locations where we currently have gaps in representation.

I have enjoyed seeing the V/Line Shunters and North Melbourne Authorised Officers so far this month, and I am excited to get out to more locations over the next coming months.

I look forward to what the New Year brings and continuing to fight to put Members first.





Victor Moore

Senior Branch Vice-President

RISK ASSESSMENTS

On 2 February, the RTBU attended a risk assessment that arose out of an assault on members which lead to injuries. These members were working on the upstairs barriers at Dandenong station near Christmas time.

The incident occurred when two gangs who were fighting head-to-head at Dandenong station. As station staff desperately scrambled to safety in a small, enclosed storeroom, some of the assailants tried to force their way in.

This type of incident is all too common occurrence at Dandenong, as station staff reported incidents proves.

For example, last year station staff were involved in an incident involving machete attacks, passengers carrying weapons and threatening station staff, assaults on station staff and threats to kill, just to name a few.

Dandenong is the number one station for reported anti-social and violent incidents across the network. Station staff are commended for continuing to ensure that every incident is reported and logged for follow-up action through INX.

The risk assessment explored opening a glass enclosed room equipped with proper

communications, visibility and security to ensure that station staff are able to quickly access a safe location.

It also provides an opportunity for station staff to monitor from a safe enclosed area operations of the barrier arrays and CVM's and to assist passengers in a safe manner.

This meeting was an important opportunity for barrier staff to lay their concerns on the table and raise issues already identified, including additional CCTV coverage, more radios and emergency responses.

The RTBU will continue to seek out the voices of station staff at Dandenong to be involved in addressing their concerns both to Metro management and the Department of Transport.

Station Staff Vacancies

In other developments, Omicron has had a big impact on station operations across the network as many members have had to self-isolate due to Covid impacts.

A small number of station closures have occurred as a direct result of the unavailability of station staff, which once again goes to show the failure by Metro Trains to sustain station staff



numbers and to recruit and promote station staff across the network.

It has also highlighted the totally inadequate process around training for a career path and promotion.

While some vacancies are currently being advertised and filled, the void that exists between vacancies and rostered numbers appears to be a chasm that Metro are unwilling to fill despite its negative impact on station staff and passenger assistance services.

With the new Metro Tunnel station staff positions to be filled soon, the need to fill existing vacancies are paramount. If Metro is serious about future proofing station staffing levels for key projects such as the new Metro tunnel along with the newly built premium and host stations, they need to prioritise filling the vacancies.

The RTBU will continue to campaign to ensure all station vacancies are filled and existing station staff are given the opportunity and training for promotion and a proper career path, rather than the ad hoc approach currently utilised by Metro management.



CLIMATE IMPACTS AT WORK

In recent years the RTBU has been responding to increasing numbers of workplace issues related to heat and other environmental factors. To strengthen our response and prepare for anticipated future developments, the RTBU has been working closely with other unions and Friends of the Earth (FoE) in coordinating a union and worker led response to workplace climate impacts.

Take the Climate Impacts at Work survey by heading to rtbu.info/ClimateImpacts or by using the QR code here:



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