



Southern Queensland Branch News

01st March 2011

NEW ZEALAND EARTHQUAKE APPEAL

The disaster in New Zealand has seen a massive death toll. The Union has been in touch with our alliance partners and it is clear that the events in the last week or so have caused damage and loss of life on an unprecedented scale. The Union has indicated to our New Zealand comrades that we will commence an appeal through a single point and assist as much as possible with financial assistance. The National Secretary has authorised the establishment of a relief fund to which members and Branches can contribute. The details are as follows:

Account Number for internal credit union transfers
BSB: 802-884 Account number: 4626S2- Earthquake Fund

Account number for external transfer (non credit union member)
Account number: 802-884 100 011 251 – Earthquake Fund

Your assistance in getting this account going is appreciated to help our comrades in this time of need.

WORKCHOICES MARK II

Liberals campaign begins to re-introduce WorkChoices.

“Behind the scenes, the Liberals are rallying support from self-interested business organisations and rolling out a series of relics from the Howard era to champion WorkChoices Mark II.

“WorkChoices was resoundingly rejected by the Australian electorate, and belongs to the past, as do the views of Peter Reith, who masterminded the most bitter and divisive attack on Australian workers in recent history.

“Under the Liberals, individual Australian Workplace Agreements were used to cut the pay and conditions of hundreds of thousands of workers.

“The Liberals have a policy agenda to attack collective bargaining, strip away the safety net of minimum standards and independent industrial umpire, and undermine the job security of the 10 million working Australians.

“This is a core Liberal belief, and it is unsurprising that the Liberals would return to it.

“It is about time the Liberals and their business friends produced some evidence of their hysterical claims about the Australian Industrial Relations system. Once again, it is truth overboard from Peter Reith.

“Rather than AWAs lifting economic productivity, it actually fell during the years when the Liberals were in power.

“There is no evidence of a wages break-out in Australia. Wage growth is a manageable 3.8%, which reflects some share of improved economic conditions flowing through to workers, and industrial disputes remain historically low.

“Since the Fair Work Act began operation, more Australians are seeing the benefits of collective bargaining, which has spread to 43% of the workforce. Workers on collective agreements receive higher wages and there is a smaller gender pay gap for collective agreements.

“But importantly, co-operation in workplaces through collective bargaining is an important driver of productivity. All Australian workers have a stake in a more productive economy, but that will not be achieved by going back to WorkChoices.”

SWA TAG STEVEDORING WORKING GROUP

The MUA's work on identifying stevedoring safety gaps in the new harmonised WHS Act will form the basis of discussions on the working group which will provide recommendations back to the TAG on the requirement or not for stevedoring specific regulation. Clearly there is a great need for this form of regulation as a number of serious incidents continue to rock the safety performance of Australian wharves.

Not enough is being done by employers to stem the tide of the waterfront accidents. While most employers spend their time arguing against regulation, life itself is demonstrating that the time to regulate for waterfront safety is long overdue.

An incident at the Brisbane DPW Terminal where a forklift tipped over indicates the dangerous and precarious work that requires a regulatory approach. Workers need certainty and strong laws to ensure that safety is the first and foremost question that arises in all aspects of stevedoring work.

The Industry needs strong laws that deliver certainty and quality in training, we need certification and licensing to be upgraded and we need to ensure that self-regulation is not the basis of waterfront safety. How many more incidents do we need before regulation of safety laws is guaranteed on the Australian waterfront?

In terms of container safety the MUA is engaged with the ILO whereby a meeting will be held with ITF representation to consider international standards around safety in the supply chain in relation to packing of containers. This critical function can lead to some certainty in knowing that boxes are packed in a way that can give comfort to workers who deal with them and the community who are potentially exposed to them.

TRAINING/ORGANISING

As members are aware training had been lined up throughout last year with ACTU accredited tutors locked in for a number of planned training courses throughout 2010. Due to the training clauses in one of the Enterprise Agreements, the number of days allocated for training had been exhausted. It is essential that the Enterprise Agreements allow for the release of members off the job to undertake training of which there are a number of courses available. This matter should be a priority for EA discussions.

As well as training issues, a number of organising forums were held throughout 2010 where delegates from your areas attended and participated in a structured program developed in the Branch with the assistance of Assistant National Secretary W. Smith and Lead Organiser B. Farrelly. These forums were conducted for three months of the four major areas with goals set and tasks allocated.

Courses - there are a number of courses available that have been developed by the ACTU for 'Staff Organisers and Delegates' and inquiries can be via the Branch.

QUEENSLAND BRANCH

The application of the amended Rules comes into realisation from today, 1st March 2011 which sees the Branch as a State Branch. Since the formation of the MUA in 1993 the State has had two Branches. It is another significant milestone for the MUA.

We pass on our congratulations and thanks to the Honorary North Queensland Branch Secretary for a job well done in North Queensland. Laurie Horgan will remain a National Councillor until the quadrennial election of the Union is finalised.
