



# Southern Queensland Branch News

24<sup>th</sup> June 2009

## QUEENSLAND NOT FOR SALE

The Queensland Council of Unions and affiliated Unions are embarking on a regional tour to protest the privatisation of public assets under the banner of "Queensland Not For Sale".

There will be a further rally in Brisbane on **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July**. Members are requested to note this date in their diary as the Branch would request maximum turn out of our membership on this day.

Full details will be provided in next week's *Branch News* and sent to members, as a further meeting will be held at the QCU office this Friday.

The MUA will also attend a meeting with the Federal Member of Bonner, Kerry Rae, on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June, together with other Unions.

Petitions have been distributed around our worksites and members are requested to complete and have delegates return them to the office.

Closest to home for the Maritime Union of Australia is the Port of Brisbane. Ironically the current logo with the Port of Brisbane Corporation is "here for the future".

Well, we would like to see if the future remains in public hands.

Some things actually defy logic in relation to the Bligh Government's decision relative to POBC.

- The ability for Brisbane to expand as a Port, to increase capacity unlike other Ports on the Australian eastern sea board;
- The possibility that Brisbane could become a hub Port in the future given its closeness to our major trading partners.
- The Prime Minister Rudd announced on 21<sup>st</sup> May that infrastructure Australian and National Transport Commission would develop a National Ports strategy (where does this leave Brisbane?)

### **Privatisation - Undemocratic, Unaccountable and Flawed**

Privatisation is a flawed concept that the Maritime Union of Australia is fundamentally opposed to. Examples all over the world demonstrate that privatisation does not deliver the benefits that its supporters claim. It is worthy of note that the supporters of privatisation are usually from the big end of town or are consultants or companies that stand to gain from the sale of public assets to private ownership.

We put to you some reasons why privatisation of Queensland assets should be opposed:

**Profit Motive:** Private ownership dictates that the profit motive overrides all other considerations. The subordination of social responsibility to profit is a disaster waiting to happen. Profit driven corporations are inherently undemocratic and will serve only those who can pay regardless of what is best for the community.

**Accountability:** The Port of Brisbane as an iconic transport facility is fully accountable to government. Private enterprise will not be accountable to government or the public.

**Downsizing and Job Losses:** Slashing jobs is the quickest and easiest way to increase profits. Some jobs that are the first to go are in areas not essential to the creation of profits. These jobs more often than not relate to safety critical areas.

Further to this, shippers and freight forwarders should have immediate concerns as private ownership of the Port could lead to a substantial increase in Port related charges. If this occurs, where are our members placed if shippers by-pass Brisbane?

Well, we have already seen the results of an 'economic downturn' and there is nothing joyous in the outcome of a drop in trade figures for our members.

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### **ASSET SALES ABSOLUTELY NOT NECESSARY**

State Premiers have maintained that the asset sales are necessary because the world economic crisis has reduced Australian government income. But that's a poor excuse. In fact, the beneficiaries of the asset sales will be the purchasers, because most of the sales involve extremely important government services, for which there will always be a strong demand, and because during a depression prices for such facilities fall to rock bottom. It's the worst time for government to sell, but the very best for purchasers.

As Curtin University professor of Economics Peter Kenyon commented:

*"The government should be looking at ... economic efficiency. And economic efficiency would say that what we need here is a pretty careful cost-benefit analysis about in which hands would we get the most efficient outcome. Is it in the public sector's hands, or in the private sector's hands?"*

*Now that's a very different type of analysis that is required than (whether) we need a boost to treasury finance now because we're short of cash. That's not really an argument for privatisation – it's the worst possible case, in fact, for privatisation."*

The real solution to the privatisation epidemic was demonstrated in the defeat of the attempted sell-off of the Snowy-Hydro authority and the NSW electricity generators, by the combined opposition of the Union movement and concerned community organisations. That's surely the way to go.

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### **APPRECIATION**

Tony Austin wishes to express his gratitude to Branch Secretary Mick Carr for the opportunity to represent the members as a relieving official this past week. He gained very valuable experience in Enterprise Agreement matters both waterfront and at sea, enjoying a visit to the "British Loyalty" while she was berthed at Pinkenba.

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### **THANK YOU**

DPWorld Terminal member, Tony Austin, wishes to express his heartfelt appreciation for the financial assistance from the Benevolent fund following the recent loss of his father, Ted, a life member of the MUA. Ted worked for over 40 years on the Newcastle waterfront and transferred to Brisbane on many occasions. He also held the position of Newcastle Branch Secretary for many years. May he now rest in peace, finally succumbing to a long illness.

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