

No 7 – 14 April 2021

Acting Branch Secretary's Report – Assistant Secretary's Report – Relief Official's Report North Queensland Report

Acting Branch Secretary Report *by Jason Miners*

The Branch over many years has advocated for First Nation's comrades for their rightful place in our industry. The picture below is, as far as I am aware, the first full indigenous crew on the Gladstone/Weipa run in our times. This is both a testament to the comrades in the picture who represent their union and their Branch proudly and the ensuing commitment from the Union to follow through on our commitments to First Nation's workers.



From L-R: Robbie Coolwell (Chief I.R./Bosun), Garry Ketchell (Engine Room I.R.) from T.S.I, Thomas (Locky) Mairu (12-4 Watchkeeper) from T.S.I, Tamati Cockatoo (4-8 Watchkeeper) from Tiwi Island, Jake Paul (Chief Cook) from down Noosa, Vicky-ree Morta (Operational Caterer) from up Cairns

ABC Interview with Jason Miners re Movers 3



Acting Queensland Branch Secretary, Jason Miners speaks to the ABC regarding the detention of the Movers 3 ship. Click on the link below to listen to the interview.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/northqld/programs/north-qld-drive/drive/13282902>

Hutchison EBA After 3 Long Years of Negotiations has an Agreement in Principle

MUA Members at Hutchison and at the other terminals who have watched this shit show of a negotiation unfold over the past 3 years can now be notified we have agreement subject to drafting.

Last week Warren Smith and myself met Hutchison in Sydney for two intense days of negotiations which saw us close out the final key items and reach an in principal agreement. (We had our three delegates on zoom the for the entirety of the official discussions)

Kerryn has been assisting with the drafting process which will continue tomorrow in Sydney with myself and Warren.

Hutchison EBA Outcomes

Roster for perms which will either be 56 or 64 depending on how many cancelations come up, initially it will be 56 if it works without a heap of idol time and cancelled shifts 8 more will automatically go up onto the roster of 8 x 8 panels after review. (This may require further explanation and debate)

I would like to thank the members who have remained united and patient throughout and especially the delegates Kerryn, Goldie and Diggs who assisted Assistant Branch Secretary, Paul Petersen throughout the discussions. You have all done a good job throughout.

You have all done your best and seen this through which has recently led to what I believe is a good outcome and good agreement which brings Hutchison in line with standards along the keyline and in some cases exceeding them. **No loss of the Team Leader!**

I've arranged a paid 4 hour meeting to commence on Friday the 23rd of April from 0700 to 1100 (Bulimba Bowls Club) and it is absolutely essential everyone turn up with your questions and comments.

This will NOT be an EA vote however we will be debating and discussing all aspects of the agreement in principal and progress on the drafting.

The Branch will put on a few refreshments.

In Unity

Jason Miners

Acting Branch Secretary

See key outcomes below:

Wages

On certification 2021	1 st anniversary 2022	2nd anniversary 2023	3rd anniversary 2024	Expiry 2025
2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

Automation

No loss of jobs due to implementation of automation and technology.

Peaks and troughs

Clause agreed that deals with downturn of business that gives control to the workforce to mitigate against redundancies.

Rosters

Permanent rosters to be implemented in Brisbane and Sydney.

Guarantee Workers in Brisbane

48 guarantee positions of 16 hours (2-shifts) per week with a review to see if 20 hours per week is sustainable.

Recruitment

Recruitment will be through the following percentages:

- 60% of recruits through family and friends of EBA employees
- 30% through names offered by the Branch
- 10% through management

Discipline

All single FTR warnings fall away after 12 months

32 warnings removed

Lower than a final warning will bear no weight after 12 months for selection

Job Share

Job Share arrangements are included in the agreement

Right of Return

Right of return for those impacted by redundancy

Safety

High quality safety clause including HSR rights

Domestic Violence

20 days paid domestic violence leave

Selection Criteria

New and improved selection criteria.

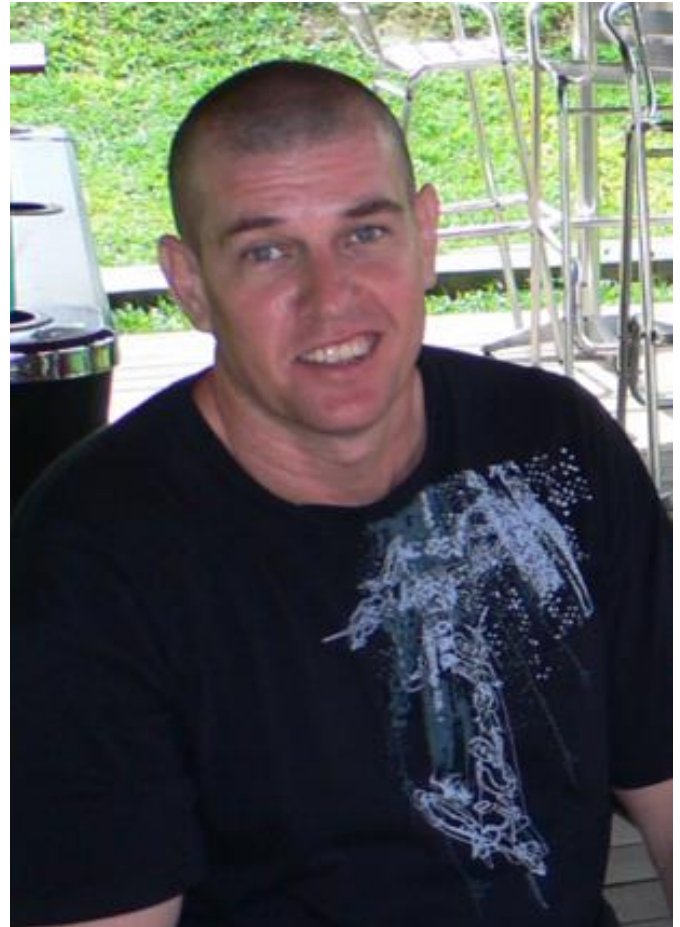
Gladstone Member Meeting

There will be a meeting of Gladstone members this Thursday 15 April starting at 5.30pm being held at Union Corner. All available Gladstone members urged to attend.

Vale Clavin Parry

It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of a valued shipmate, seaman and unionist – Clavin Parry; taken too soon at the age of 59.

Clavin started his seafaring life working in the RAN. He then worked with the MSB Brisbane, sailing the Brisbane River on various work boats. He was re-trained in 1995 and joined the NW Sanderling as an IR in 1997 and then the NW Snipe from 2007 until his passing on the 8th of March 2021.



His dry wit and his love of telling a good story was legendary and it would always end with his huge infectious laugh. No one ever had a bad word to say about him, that was the mettle of the man.

Clavin loved horses which he reared and trained himself. It was his passion.

He took to learning the guitar and playing country music later in life. He loved a good coffee and was also an avid reader.

Clav enjoyed having a beer with his mates and having a good time.

You could always rely on Clavin to either be the delegate or support the delegates and the union. He would attend the stop work meetings when he could and contribute when necessary.

The NW Snipe will miss our shipmate, but he will never be forgotten.

Clavin is survived by his wife Jane, who has our sincerest condolences.

NW SNIPE CREW

Wayne Wakefield Farewell

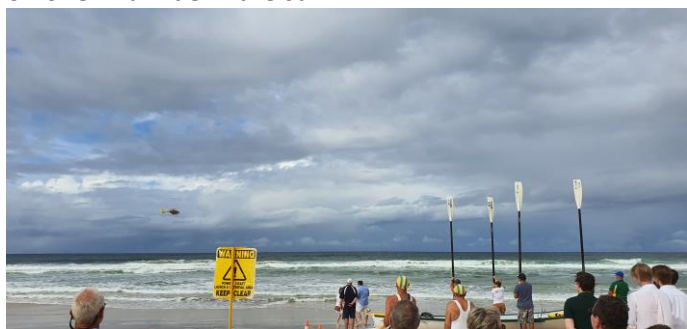
On Saturday 20th March family and friends of Wayne Wakefield gathered at Tugun Beach to pay respect as the Tugun Surf Life Saving Club took Wayne's ashes out to sea and laid him to rest.



In a very moving ceremony, the Tugun SLSC formed a guard of honour on the beach in front of the club surf rowboat.



Due to unfavourable weather and surf conditions Wayne was taken out to sea in an IRB by two current lifeguards. The IRB did laps and rode the waves safely to get out past the breakers and it seemed like they were taking Wayne on one final ride in the surf.



As the IRB settled in calmer waters past the breaker the Westpac helicopter did a fly by then circled back, lowered above the water and hovered adjacent to the IRB. As Wayne's ashes were scattered into the sea the chopper dipped its nose downwards and tail up as a sign of respect and then did one more fly by past those gathered on the beach.

In a very touching ceremony for a very humble man who gave so much of himself to surf lifesaving Big W was finally home where he loved to be, in the ocean.

Those in attendance then retired to the Tugun SLSC bar and raised a glass in honour of Wayne.

VALE JAMIE CAMPBELL – Townsville Tugs



The Branch offers our sincere condolences to the family and friends of long term Townsville tug member, Jamie Campbell who passed away suddenly 17 March 2021.

Assistant Secretary Report *by Paul Gallagher*

Safety on Kitty Cats Update

After being called in to represent a master being disciplined for incidents surrounding the new Kitty Cat vessels, I found there was a more serious incident had happened to a non-member and there were more systematic failures than any incompetence involved. I proceeded to investigate the matter more thoroughly. My comprehensive safety report found that:

- A recent incident causing a passenger to fall off the gangway and into the river would have been avoided if a deckhand had been on board.
- Risk assessments for the Kitty Cats were carried out in a hurry somewhere up the river before they came into service by management. Masters were not consulted, did not sign off on them ever and at the time of my investigation not one

skipper I spoke to had even seen the risk assessment used to crew with one person.

- The wake of the vessels is so big they are restricted in speed to 6 or 8 knots keeping them constantly behind schedule.
- Drills such as fire, man overboard, abandon ship cannot be carried out let alone be addressed in a real life emergency.
- The amount of work being done with one person is a dangerous situation just waiting for someone to get seriously hurt. Either the master or passengers.
- The one crew member is mostly useless in case of an emergency because they have to maintain control of the vessel.
- Passenger safety and service is non-existent with one person crew.
- The same identical vessels in Sydney are crewed with one master and one deckhand.
- Fatigue is an issue due to the amount of stops, an unreasonable schedule making them and other vessels constantly late, a split deck making the skipper an extra 240 - 350 steps per shift up and down from the wheelhouse to the main deck.
- The schedule was reduced from 42 minutes to 25 minutes there is hardly any time to stop and toilet breaks are rare.
- If in the case the skipper goes down with medical condition, there is no one on board trained to either administer first aid or take the vessel to a safe position. Likewise, if a passenger has an episode there is no one trained to assist as the one crew has to put the vessel safely alongside and tie up first.

My report was sent to River City Ferries (RCF), Sealink, Brisbane City Council, ALP opposition Council and AMSA. There was a rally at a city terminal Friday 26 March where we made the public aware of the situation and handed out hundreds of flyers.

A master and myself spoke to ABC radio afterwards.

The unions met with Brisbane City Council contracts manager who took the matter seriously and referred us to address it with RCF and get back to them.

AMSA was sent a copy of the report and I am consulting inspectors. Typical of the toothless tiger attitude and bureaucratic joke they have become they are saying at this stage that the vessels sit one inch shorter of the required 12 meters for automatically making them 2 crew. They are currently investigating two incidents and have said if it is found that a deckhand should be required, they would say so but until then will not be ordering RCF or BCC to employ a deckhand. We will not hold our breath.

At last week's meeting with RCF they are bringing in their most senior safety officer from head office to complete their own investigation and new risk assessments. This will be done in consultation with the unions. From there we have committed to sit down with RCF and assist with their business case pitch to council to justify the massive cost increase of putting deck hands on board remembering this is a free service. Obviously, safety is the one factor rises above costs in our opinion and that will be made clear but there have been some efficiencies found.



As it stands, we have requested that the approximate 8 masters among the deckhands waiting to be inducted should be installed immediately as deckhands/training masters. This was denied. We do not think this is good enough comrades and will up the campaign on safety for a temporary solution by way of more rallies and public awareness.

Meanwhile we are still battling RCF in Fairwork to pay penalty rates for their PPTs working over agreed hours. We have resolved our dispute for lack of consultation on their D&A policy and random testing has recommenced. We are fighting with management over internal recruitment to stop them picking favourites for promotion and training. We have drafted a document that makes it more transparent and fair yet management are so far refusing to accept the document. They have been written to and told that we will not accept their amendments to the document we are sticking to what the members voted on in a full survey. While we argue this, they have been guilty of promoting and headpicking. With a new roster about to be announced we would like this finalised.

New rosters being proposed - RCF would not commit that no employee would be worse off financially. They believe some will win some will lose but it will be an improved roster. They are promoting a lifestyle roster of 38 hours pw featuring mainly weekdays. For those interested they will have to sign individual flexibility agreements and earn

under the safety net wage in the EBA. The union will look at these arrangements and advise accordingly.

Activist Committee

On Friday 26 March there was a meeting of activists called in the Brisbane office. There were reports from Jamie Newlyn and Michelle Myer, national officials in charge of the shipping campaign and other campaigns. Also reports from the Queensland officials about local issues. It was resolved to restart the activist committee and organise its structure accordingly by giving everyone a role to play. It was agreed that it would meet once per month on the Friday before our monthly meetings followed by an action. With national officials and activist alike successfully coming in by zoom video it was decided that all meetings would be made available on zoom for those who cannot attend.



A zoom invitation will be sent to all members for the next meeting as we build up our movement. All committee members will be on the mailing list and kept up to date with our campaigns. We will also, when required, be supporting other unions campaigns and community struggles.

Far North Queensland Update *by Dave Lyon*

It has been a very busy start to 2021 in Far North Queensland. I have been travelling pretty much weekly including most weekends trying to see as many of our members as possible scattered around the far north on various jobs.

Sea Swift

Over the last few months, Mike O'Shane and I have been up to the Torres Straits meeting with the Sea Swifts crews and staff plus the traditional owners from the outer Islands. We had several positive meetings and interest from the TO's in relation to constructing a Social Compact between the MUA and the TO's to strengthen ties and to proactively assist each other to increase union density and improve the working conditions of the outer Island Peoples and the crew that work for Sea Swift. As Sea Swift is the monopoly freight provider for the Northern Island

communities, working in conjunction with the elders will help to provide leverage for the MUA and our membership working in Northern Australia.

I have also done a couple of trips to Darwin to assist the NT Branch with the Sea Swift Campaign. Visiting the crew on the Darwin based vessel and rebuilding the relationship with the crews. These trips have been very well received by the Crews in the NT and they are all becoming more interested and active in relation to securing a decent EA to cover them.

Obviously, being Cairns based, I have done multiple RoE's on all of the Cairns based vessels as well.

This has been a long time coming and it was never expected that a single visit would resolve the broken ties that have accrued over the last few years, but I am happy to report that it's all coming together now.

Transshipment Services Australia (TSA)

As most of the QLD membership would remember from my previous correspondence, I have been working with the Crew that work up in Skardon River FNQ. This site is a bauxite mine run by Metro mining in Cape York that sub-contracts their marine side to a company called TSA.

Last year during the recruitment campaign I circulated an online petition for a majority support determination to make the company start to bargain for an agreement. Once we had an excess of 70% of the entire workforce sign onto the petition, we let the employer know of our intention and they proceeded to do their own petition and the results were overwhelming in support of doing an EA.

Unknown to myself TSA had started another project in Bing Bong in the NT and used that site to start the EA process. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly the company select a handful of their "trusted" staff and a number of captive staff that were unable to contact the Union and instructed everyone to self-represent for the bargaining and then rushed through a substandard Agreement over the Christmas break. Grubby, dirty tactics at its finest.

Luckily enough, the MUA National Office found the Agreement once it was lodged in the FWC and obviously objected to its approval on a number of sub-standard conditions that were included within.

This is the current status of the TSA agreement, but it should also serve as a reminder to all members not to assume that the Officials/organisers are aware of what going on, if something is happening that you feel the Branch should know of, talk to your delegate or flick a quick email off to the Branch to ensure that we are all fully aware of the ongoing. In this instance we are confident that we should be able to knock the Agreement off, but if we had been told earlier, we could have saved a great deal of time and money in the process.

Carpentaria Contracting

Carpentaria Contracting is a relatively small employer

based in Weipa FNQ, who have been slowly expanding and now have a couple of new contracts and additional vessels. I will be watching this company closely and looking at submitting a Right of Entry in the coming weeks upon the arrival of their new 55m landing craft in Cairns.

Australian Reef Pilots (ARP)

The MUA and AMOU has been working on a majority support determination with the crew working for ARP. I am pleased to announce that this has been a successful campaign and ARP have now agreed to commence bargaining for an EA with the AMOU and the MUA. I would like to publicly thank Tracey Ellis from the AMOU for all her work and for working so closely with us to ensure we are also going to be party to the new Agreement. It is pleasing to see that the AMOU have a respectful organiser that is happy to work with the MUA for the greater good of all marine crew and not against us like certain people in other marine unions.

Quicksilver Group and the Tourist Industry

As everyone would expect the effects of COVID-19 have been greatly felt by the tourist industry as a whole. All of the Agreements that were being bargained for have been put on hold for now to wait and see what the end result would look like. Easter was looking promising for the industry but once again COVID, "the gift that keep on giving" has upset a great deal of Australians plans to travel into or within Queensland this Easter. So once again we will just have to wait and see what happens and assess the situation as it evolves. Unfortunately for our comrades that work in the industry this is more disheartening news and unfortunately seeing the light at the end of the tunnel is getting harder and harder.

First Nations Report *by Michael O'Shane*

Part of this ATSI/ First Nations Report will be a geography lesson for those of you who are not familiar with the different names of First Nation Tribes. It's a bit like State of Origin football, when we tell people what tribe we belong to they know where we are from who our families are and our history of sorts so reading this report I will be using the names of the tribes and where it relates to which is the only way we can describe where the actions are taking place.

This report will also once again identify the valuable benefit of having relationships with our kindred Unions.

QUANDAMOOKA also known as Stradbroke Island

Over the last couple of years there has been ongoing engagement with the Quandamooka People around training and employment with the Stradbroke Ferries and other opportunities. At the same time, we have engaged with Captain Steve Pelacanos ex Port of Brisbane Harbour Master (27 years) setting up an opportunity to do the Port of Brisbane pilotage. This has now come to fruition beginning next year, there has already been a meeting

with Quandamooka People and Steve and one other Company Director under the guidance of Comrade Mikey O'Shane, we are looking for a couple of trainee intakes very soon to move into full time employment January 2022.

While at Quandamooka we must report that there was some work done with the ETU, in particular Stewie Trail and ENERGEX. Comrade Trail was able to get the introductions happening and in the next few weeks the General Manager of ENERGEX along with the ETU and the MUA we will visit Quandamooka and explain the opportunities available for employment, traineeships, apprenticeships etc, all facilitated through the Queensland Branch office of the MUA.

WULGURUKABA

The Port of Townsville are doing some serious work dredging the harbour for a massive new development. The Traditional Owners (Wulgurukaba People) are engaged in some small way but need assistance. The Queensland Branch have a watching brief and have been working closely with Brenton Creed the Chair of the organisation representing the Wulgurukaba People.

We are also working closely with the local First Nation Employment Services advocating for a Social Compact between the MUA and the Wulgurukaba People (a draft one has been delivered) we are looking to progress this Social Compact to the Port of Townsville Authority as a means of an Employment Strategy.

KAURAREG – GUDANG – WUTHATHI – ANGGAMUTHI

Sea-Swift shipping is on our radar and in particular in the Torres Straits. Sea Swift operations in the Torres Straits are based on Kaurareg Peoples land of Horn Island, then to the mainland at Bamaga home of the Clan Group of Gudang, Wuthathi and Anggamuthi. The MUA are reaching out to these people and have been active in this area for some time, Dave Lyon has played a significant role in keeping our presence visible in this region.

We will be attending Thursday Island to celebrate May Day this year, there is ongoing engagement with the Traditional Owners as we follow traditional protocols when moving around peoples traditional country.

We are seeking an invite to a land Summit which is being held at the same time of the May Day celebrations. Our engagement is aimed at the unionization of the Sea Swift vessels ensuring these seafarers receive the benefits and outcomes available to seafarers anywhere on the Australian Coast.

Mikey O'Shane, Paul Gallagher, Thomas Mayor and Dave Lyon have all visited Thursday Island as part of our campaign of unionization, relieving Branch Secretary, Comrade Miners will lead the MUA contingent to Thursday Island for May Day this year.

We have done a draft document to go to Willy Wignes

with a number of dot points to be considered by his mob and if agreeable we will develop that into a Social Compact that spells out each party's responsibility to the other but more importantly to the broader membership of Torres Strait Islander People.

Alan Kohler: Corporate Australia Made Out Like Bandits with JobKeeper Subsidies. Maybe we Should have an Inquiry

Source: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2021/03/17/jobkeeper-schemes-massive-orts/>



JobKeeper did save jobs, no doubt about it. But it also opened a treasure trove of taxpayer dollars to corporate pillagers. Photo: AAP

Most of the ASX-listed companies that received JobKeeper subsidies didn't need it, and the great majority of those are keeping the money.

The governance advisory firm, Ownership Matters, has detailed the way in which corporate Australia has rorted the federal government's pandemic support scheme and is not being held to account.

The study, released on Thursday, confirms a report in *The New Daily* earlier this month that found more than \$1 billion [had been paid to companies that subsequently reported increased profits or funnelled money to shareholders](#), with \$3.6 billion going out in dividends and \$20 million in executive bonuses.

The Ownership Matters study has now laid bare the extent of the gravy train.

Seventy-five ASX300 companies received \$2.4 billion in JobKeeper subsidies in calendar 2020 – \$1 billion went to 75 companies in the first half and \$1.4 billion went to 66 in the half year to December 31.

Positive earnings

Of those 66, 58 reported positive underlying earnings in the December half year. Those businesses received \$741 million, or 30 per cent of the total paid to the top 300 ASX-listed companies.

To qualify for a JobKeeper payment of \$1500 per employee per fortnight, companies had to report or credibly forecast a 30 per cent drop in sales in any single month between March 2020 and September 2020, compared to the same month in 2019. For companies with more than \$1 billion in sales, it had to be 50 per cent.

It was a very good support scheme in many ways, because the money flowed quickly to businesses that needed it, because it used the existing systems of the Australian Tax Office, and it kept employees connected to their employers.

But because it was rushed, it had significant flaws that unscrupulous companies were able to exploit, and the government now doesn't seem to be interested in holding them to account.

Most of the businesses suffered the qualifying drop in sales immediately, in March 2020, because they had to close entirely for at least six to 10 days (30 per cent of the trading days that month).

Their sales weren't checked again until September, and that meant six months' worth of JobKeeper for many businesses, or \$19,500 per employee, was paid no matter what happened to their sales after the lockdown.

For businesses such as car dealer AP Eagers, with 6500 employees, that meant they got \$129.7 million, even though car sales took off after the lockdowns ended and the company reported an underlying profit of \$209.4 million.



AP Eagers declared a \$209.4 million profit while grabbing \$129.7 million in JobKeeper subsidies. Photo: Getty

Crown Resorts reported underlying earnings of \$137.2 million in the December half year and \$143.6 million in JobKeeper. The other main casino group, Star Entertainment, reported earnings of \$225.7 million and JobKeeper payments of \$87.9 million.

Southern Cross Media reported half-year earnings of \$75.3 million and JobKeeper payments of \$31.9 million – 42 per cent of profit. And so on.

Only 15 of the 66 companies that received JobKeeper payments but increased their profits because trading picked up after the lockdown have said they will pay back the money.

The paybacks will total \$100.25 million, 4 per cent of the money received by the ASX-listed companies.

The \$2.4 billion JobKeeper payments received by those listed companies represent 2.9 per cent of the total of \$83 billion spent on JobKeeper up to December 31, according to the ATO. Another \$10 billion-or-so is expected to be

paid between December 31 and March 28, when the scheme comes to an end.

If the same amount of roting happened with the whole scheme as Ownership Matters and *The New Daily* have identified with the listed companies, the unnecessary payments to profitable companies would be close to \$30 billion.

In fact, it's possibly much more than that because private companies don't have to report their financials publicly, and are operating behind a curtain of secrecy – so there's likely to be a lot more misconduct.

The sports rorts affair, which cost then minister for sport Bridget McKenzie her job, involved \$102. 5 million of arguably misallocated money. The JobKeeper rorts are at least 290 times that amount.

The sports rorts were uncovered by the Auditor-General and then the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Philip Gaetjens, was asked to bury that report under another nicer report, which he did.

The Auditor-General announced [an investigation into JobKeeper in February](#).

Far better would be a Parliamentary inquiry, or better still a royal commission into the whole handling of the pandemic, including lockdowns, all the fiscal and monetary support, hotel quarantine and vaccines.

Breath is not being held.

Alan Kohler writes for The New Daily twice a week. He is editor in chief of Eureka Report and finance presenter on ABC News

Wages to Fall in Real Terms Despite Sharp Recovery from Recession: Survey

By Shane Wright and Jennifer Duke

Source: <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/wages-to-fall-in-real-terms-despite-sharp-recovery-from-recession-survey-20210226-p5766t.html>

Workers will endure a two-year fall in the real value of their wages despite a rapid economic recovery under way following the coronavirus pandemic.

This is the assessment of 22 of the nation's top economists as part of The Sydney Morning Herald/The Age's Scope Survey on a range of critical indicators over 2021 and 2022.



Inflation is tipped to outpace wage rises for the next two years.
CREDIT:ALAMY

Even before the pandemic recession, wage growth had been stagnant and barely keeping up with inflation. But Scope members believe it will get worse.

They expect wage growth, at a record low 1.4 per cent, will drop to 1.2 per cent this year, and lift to 1.6 per cent in 2022.

But inflation is expected to average 2.7 to the June quarter this year and then 1.7 per cent over the next 12 months.

Even under the most optimistic forecast, of 2.1 per cent wages growth from Industry Super Australia chief economist Stephen Anthony, wage rises would still fail to outpace the panel's inflation expectations.

SCOPE Economic Survey

Click here for survey table:

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/wages-to-fall-in-real-terms-despite-sharp-recovery-from-recession-survey-20210226-p5766t.html>

While this means household budgets could face extra pressure over the next two years, the overall economic outlook is positive following a challenging year that left the nation facing its first recession since 1990-91. The economy is expected to grow by 6.5 per cent in 2021 and 2.9 per cent in 2022.

Nine panellists expect the economy to return to pre-pandemic levels by mid-2021, while six expect this will be the case by the September quarter. Four respondents said it would take until 2022 for the economy to have recovered fully. The University of Western Australia's Jakob Madsen provided the bleakest outlook with a return to this level not expected until the second quarter of 2023.

The panel also forecasts the jobless rate to continue improving, dropping to 6.4 per cent in 2021 and 5.9 per cent in 2022. The official unemployment rate was 6.4 per cent in January, down from a 7.5 per cent peak in July.

Median property prices in the Sydney and Melbourne markets are widely expected to continue their unexpected surge. Sydney dwelling values are forecast to grow an average 5.9 per cent in 2021 and 4.5 per cent in 2022, while Melbourne prices are tipped to rise 4.5 per cent in 2021 and 5 per cent in 2022.

The most bullish housing market predictions came from UCL's Steve Keen, who expects 10 per cent growth annually for the next two years in Sydney and in Melbourne, while Melbourne Institute Professor Guay Lim is forecasting rises of above 8 per cent in 2021 for both cities and in excess of 7 per cent for 2022.

Professor Madsen expects home prices to fall in both cities, with drops of 5 per cent in 2021 and 4 per cent in 2022.

Market Economics' Stephen Koukoulas expects a modest rise of 1 per cent in Sydney this year, followed by

declines of 2 per cent in 2022. In Melbourne, he predicted a 4 per cent increase in 2021 followed by a 1 per cent fall next year.

The survey found household consumption is likely to surge in 2021 with an average rise of 9.3 per cent, followed by 3.2 per cent in 2022. Business investment will lag in 2021 with an average fall expected of 3.6 per cent but this is forecast to be followed by a 3.6 per cent recovery in 2022.

Almost all panellists expect business investment to decline except for AMP Capital chief economist Shane Oliver who forecasts a modest rise of 1.7 per cent; Capital Economics' Ben Udy, 5.1 per cent; and Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre's Rebecca Cassells, 7.2 per cent.

'Right to Disconnect' Fight to Expand as Unions Push Claims in Enterprise Agreements

By Business Reporter Daniel Ziffer

Source: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-07/right-to-disconnect-fight-to-expand-trade-union-eba-push/100050264?utm_source=abc_news_web&utm_medium=content_share&utm_content=facebook&utm_campaign=abc_news_web&fbclid=IwAR23QibM9P1_BZu6QkOWYJ9gRPWIV1IC6JCsXOcuV_tFSRmfYymiy7q4As0



Unions are pushing to enshrine the right of employees to ignore non-emergency work contact outside of their rostered hours (Pexels/ABC Life: Luke Tribe)

Some of the nation's biggest unions are pushing for more Australians to have the 'right to disconnect' from phone calls, texts and emails outside of work hours, but employers warn it could stifle flexibility for both businesses and their staff.

Key points:

- The "right to disconnect" allows workers to refuse after-hours contact
- First legislated in France, Victoria Police have signed up to abide by it
- Large unions are pushing for the right, to combat overwork

Large public sector unions currently bargaining with government employers are seeking to cement a clause enshrining the right in upcoming agreements, [after Victoria Police employees won the right in their most recent workplace negotiation](#).

"It is essential that working people be able to disconnect," Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) secretary Sally McManus argued.

"This is especially important for people who perform psychologically stressful work.

"If work invades all hours of your life and you cannot disconnect, it is a recipe for serious problems for both the worker and the employer."

The right to disconnect directs managers and colleagues to respect leave and rest days and avoid contacting workers outside work hours unless in an emergency.



ACTU secretary Sally McManus says the right to disconnect from work is especially important for people in stressful occupations. (ABC)

"Without clear boundaries separating work and the rest of your life, working people can be both expected to work extra unpaid hours and be subject to a job that is at high risk of mental health problems," Ms McManus added.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's acting chief executive Jenny Lambert said any move to ban employer contact through a right to disconnect would not align with the "modern 24-hour economy".

She warned it might even perversely force many workplaces to deny employees autonomy and return to a clock-in system.

"Whilst a right to disconnect may be well-intentioned, it is unlikely to be welcomed by many employees, including those who prefer to deal with work and communication in a way that suits their personality," Ms Lambert argued. Professor Emmanuel Jossierand from the Centre for Business and Social Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney expects the debate about the right to disconnect to intensify, after the ructions of 2020 shattered workplace norms about on-site and remote work.

"So it means that this question – about the boundary between the private and professional life – will be more acute than it was before," he said.

"I think we'll see more clauses in employment agreements on the topic, especially in the wake of COVID."

Turn Back the Clock

Police Association of Victoria secretary Wayne Gatt helped secure the right for the force's more than 17,000

staff, many of them engaged in difficult, dangerous and mentally taxing work.

"You carry that load, you carry that work 24/7," he said.

"It's really important that as much as possible – though you can't all the time – we try and introduce some barriers so our members can wind down, so they can return to normal."

Australians are [in the top half of developed nations for hours spent working](#), while [recent ABS figures show](#) nearly 6 per cent of employees spent more than 60 hours a week at work in December 2020, and another 14 per cent spent between 45 and 59 hours working.

Technology has aided the extension of work, with cheap and accessible laptops and mobile phones connecting workers to employers at all hours.

Mr Gatt recalled the working culture before that, and said going back to the future was part of what the union was [pushing its members' employer to reinstate](#).

"The majority of (out of hours) contacts that are made by employers to employees are contacts of convenience, not essentiality," he argued.

"Even in policing, the majority, the overwhelming majority of matters, can wait until the next shift.

"In emergency situations our members will be there, they'll always be available for the community. But if it can wait it should wait."

Disconnect Push

The pressure of increasing workloads is a major issue for members of the education sector and agreements currently being negotiated seek to address it.

"I certainly agree with the need to make sure there's a genuine work/life balance," said Meredith Peace, Victorian branch president of the Australian Education Union.

Representatives of her almost 50,000 members have detailed extraordinary pressure to be available far beyond their working day.

"Our claim currently being negotiated is seeking workload relief in a range of different ways. One of those is around things like email and communications outside of working hours."

When COVID forced the revolution of home-schooling on Australian families, the hours that teachers worked exploded, alongside parents' expectations about being able to contact staff.

"Schools have platforms they use that parents and students can tap into," Ms Peace said.

"We get regular reports from members that they feel there's an expectation they respond to things outside of working hours, at any time of the day, because of the technology."



The Australian Education Union says home schooling significantly increased teachers' after-hours workload. (ABC News: Freya Michie)

Flexibility Goes Both Ways

The digital era – and the COVID-powered 'WFH' (work from home) revolution – has given employees flexibility too, noted acting ACCI CEO Jenny Lambert.

"A one-size-fits all approach with a blanket ban on communication outside of work hours is likely to prevent taking benefits from the digital era and will disadvantage many employees in the workplace," she argued.

"Remote access to the workplace often makes employees feel empowered, gives them greater autonomy and flexibility to self-regulate their own work around their personal commitments and contributes to an overall more productive workforce."

Adoption of the right has been controversial in France, Ms Lambert added.

"(It) was part of a controversial package of changes that led to strikes and civil unrest, and the rules in France have been criticised for lacking clarity and practicality."

Negotiate Boundaries

Danni Hunter is busy as Victorian executive director of the Property Council of Australia, managing her staff and promoting the aims of the organisation.

She is also a mother to young children, so she uses technology and flexible working to make her life function.

"What that looks like for everyone is really different," she said.

"But there definitely has to be boundaries put in place both by the business, but also by the employee, about how often they want to work, when they want to be contactable ... often that's really negotiated in a team sense, in a business sense."

She added that it is the responsibility of leaders to model good behaviour and empower staff to leave work at work, with the benefits obvious for all.

"We need to give ourselves enough mental rest and enough decompression time to actually absorb what we're learning and be able to put new and creative ideas in place," Ms Hunter argued.



Danni Hunter, Victorian director of the Property Council of Australia, puts boundaries around when she's accessible on the phone and when she checks emails. (ABC News: Scott Jewell)

"If your life and your mind is so clogged up with the everyday then it's really hard to find the headspace that you need to be able to do that creative thinking, strategic thinking and that higher order creative work."

Australia's Great Migration Wages Experiment is Under Way

By Michael Pascoe

Source: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/finance-news/2021/03/16/michael-pascoe-migration-wages-experiment/>

Australia has unintentionally embarked on a great economic experiment over the thorny question of whether migration lowers wages.

Counter to the usual posturing of the anti-immigration lobby, **the economic literature generally suggests immigration increases wages overall, but not necessarily for the lowest-paid groups.**

With immigration effectively halted, Australia will be labour market economists' petri dish – a chance for real-time experience to sort out the veracity of torturing of historical data.

But that's only if the government allows the experiment to run.

For example, the well-publicised shortage of fruit and vegetable pickers should have sent agricultural wages soaring. It hasn't.

Instead, COVID exceptions are being made, **South Australia importing 1200 Pacific Islanders who will work for existing wages.**

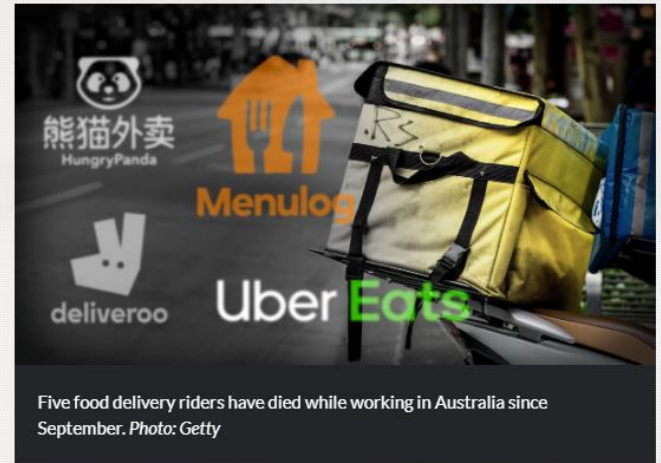


and rich profits but are not prepared to do ourselves.

That is part of the dark underbelly of the Australian economy, the former land of the fair go – the jobs we collectively want done cheaply so we can enjoy cheap stuff

You can hear it now from people forced to holiday at home instead of Bali. "Holidays are so expensive in Australia for what you get" – that's the difference paying more than subsistence wages makes.

It's the baseline of the gig economy, the food delivery riders pedalling into the night, lucky if they nearly make the minimum wage, not even afforded basic safety gear.



That's the end of the market where a careless – or intentionally designed migration system – can suppress wages.

The experiment now under way is what happens further up the chain in middle- and higher-level jobs.

An intelligent migration program for a country with Australia's massive potential should not be just a matter of adding extra demand by increasing the headcount.

A program favouring a cohort that is younger, better qualified, more entrepreneurial and more ambitious than the native population should result in one plus one equalling more than two.

A well-administered skills program, filling gaps that would otherwise prevent broader employment growth, should contribute to greater demand for labour overall and, therefore, wages.

Well, that's the theory – at least **until you run into the wall of broader wages suppression policy.**

As reported last week, specialist recruiter **Robert Half expects employers will have to offer more money this year to entice workers to leave existing jobs,** the "stability premium".

With tech and finance employers unable to turn on the migration tap to fill roles in parts of the economy recovering strongly from the pandemic slow down, the evidence will be in over the next year or so as to just how dogged is capital's real wages strike.

I don't hold an economic model, mate, but I wouldn't bet on wages growth breaking out. And nobody will be able to blame migration.

The task for labour market economists will be sorting the impact of government wages policy, weak population

growth, restricted skilled migration and the entrenched management culture of the past half dozen years or so. The industrial relations warriors of the 1970s and '80s wouldn't believe how successful capital has become in grabbing an ever-greater slice of the pie.

May Day 2021

Monday 3 May

More information to be sent to members.



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