

No 9 – 23 July 2021

Acting Branch Secretary's Report – Assistant Secretaries' Report – Relief Official's Report Women's Committee Report

Acting Branch Secretary Report *by Jason Miners*

First and foremost in my Branch report I'd like to again extend my congratulations to all the Hutchison brothers and sisters for landing their Enterprise Agreement covering both SICT AND BCT.

This is a massive achievement delivered by rank and file struggle over three long years from an employer who threw everything, including the kitchen sink at these workers and we prevailed!

Since the landing of this Agreement, I have had people from my both my union and networks commend the members and the union for this achievement.

The workers united will never be defeated.

Congratulations again comrades 🍷

Training

The Branch has recently rolled out an extensive training program across many important social and political areas of our community along with our traditional industrial program.

The Branch would like to thank everyone who took the time to actively participate in this important training. There is more training to come so stay tuned.



A special thanks must go to our resident trainer and teacher in Paul Williams and one of our newest trainers Kerry loose Jones!

This was a very busy week in the Branch Office with Delegates Introductory Training, a First Nations and Uluru Statement Workshop, a Stop Sexual Harassment in the Workplace forum, and an HSR Refresher Course. It was a full on week of learning for all involved.



A special mention for two of our past Branch Secretaries, Mick Carr and Col Davies. Their valuable contributions and insights into past, present and future issues and outcomes was warmly received and needs to be preserved for future generations of men and women in our industry.

Well done to all involved 🍷

Relieving Official Aaron Johnson

Comrades as you may be aware comrade Aaron Johnson (DPW delegate) has kindly been released from site to assist the Branch across a number of areas.



Aaron is an intelligent, articulate bloke with the smarts to represent marine workers to the highest levels of professionalism.

Aaron has been extremely

helpful to all of the executive team and has assisted us to

catch up on and progress through a backlog of work amassed during some significant periods of absence in the Branch team.

Aaron will remain on with us until Friday 27th August. Once again thanks for your steadfast assistance comrade!

Organising the Far North Before the Far North Booms Even Further!

You may be aware that there are huge policy papers referring to opening up the north of Australia through far north Queensland and the Torres Strait which are already a significant trade route for our country.

The Branch is currently engaged in a significant organising campaign in far north Queensland and the Torres Straits in key and critical areas of the multi billion dollar supply chain where there are large pockets of unorganised, undervalued and at times exploited maritime workers!

This is an area which delivers significant economic wealth to our country yet the workforce are paid and treated extremely poorly by the employers who rape the wealth from country that was stolen in what only looks like some kind of backward prehistoric example of colonisation affecting largely black workers whose families were here long before us.

This is a big campaign which we will resource. This is a campaign for industrial justice in a difficult area to organise against, with well resourced employers with deep pockets however we will do everything in our being to make it successful. Nothing great is achieved or injustice fixed by just rolling the arm over and not taking some degree of risk!

It will be tough but it is a campaign we must pursue and with the membership's support, we can prevail!

ASP Outstanding Issues

Senior officers need their horoscope read and we will be the ones to read it! With what has traditionally been a half decent relationship is now starting to resemble a moribund state which has seen masters and senior officers target our members and in particular union activities around issues such as shipboard meetings, right of entry onto vessels, travel and accommodation entitlements under the Enterprise Agreement, all with attempts to take over our traditional roles and responsibilities.

The grubs and bullies in senior roles on these four vessels are being put on notice!

The EA is all but done and requires final endorsement from the rank and file members in the vessels which no doubt will voice their disgust in the current management actions before endorsing the documents.

A special thanks must go to Matt Leach and the vessel delegate team who have done a tremendous job assisting the Branch in pursuing and ultimately landing this important Agreement.



Acting Secretary Jason Miners with Matt Leach RTM Wakmatha

Matt has been under a concerted campaign by senior officers of his vessel which we simply not tolerate.

Smit Lamnalco National EA Kicks Off!

The Branch is currently in the early stages of negotiating the replacement EA for Smit Lamnalco in the ports of Amrun/Weipa, Townsville and Mackay.

The key issues will be rosters, travel arrangements, permanent jobs and training.

We are currently collating claims from each area, conducting elections for delegates and drafting our demands in each of the port work practices.

Svitzer Put on Notice!

The multinational, tax avoiding Svitzer are being put on notice, either stop pursuing cuts to wages and conditions or get out of Queensland indefinitely!

Svitzer are currently engaged in a significant industrial campaign against our members all over the country to which the delegates and Paul Garrett in particular need to be highly commended for their persistence and patience in dealing with this reckless management team engaging in what can only be described as acts of sabotage and self harm to their reputation in Australia! For a multinational employer who operates in 73 countries and gains 40% of its wealth in Australia to pursue such a sustained attack is astounding.

Svitzer have taken the unprecedented step in setting up a scab labour hire company under lesser terms and conditions in "strategic workplace solutions" and engaging in Towage in and against unionised workplaces across various ports.

Meetings are being rolled out in the Queensland ports Svitzer operate in as the Queensland Branch commits to do whatever it can to support the national campaign and in particular our comrades in Geelong. Buckle up Svitzer you have our attention! 🙏

MUA Queensland Branch Attends Inaugural RTBU Conference in Brisbane

One of the first union leaders to reach out to myself and the Branch when I assumed the Acting Secretary role was Peter Allan who is the Secretary and successor of comrade Owen Doogan who is a long term comrade of the Branch.

Pete is a calm hardworking and at times intense bloke who has opened his union with his extensive networks and experiences to our Branch which saw us have a joint May Day with the QTUF unions in Queensland. Pete's advocacy and support for us all to work more closely together has been tremendous and will see the relationship continue to grow stronger for the betterment of our members.

I was honoured to attend and participate in a delegate focused educational conference aimed at the RTBU rank and file members. National secretary Paddy Crumlin attended and participated in this excellent conference.

Qube Safety Campaign

The Branch is currently running a safety campaign at Qube Brisbane after a string of notable incidents in what we know is traditionally a high risk job.

A thorough investigation into the entire site is being carried out by comrade Paul Gallagher. His findings so far have exposed a cover up and some issues around the Wagners wharf at Pinkenba. Paul and the inspectors will be going over the site during the next ship but the main concern of Qube members is the discharging of cement clinker. The discharge operation is very dusty and the cargo has a high percentage of silica. The company have yet to recognise this danger or educate its workforce on the dangers of silicosis. When it comes to a serious safety campaign comrade Gallagher is the best in this space and has full support of the Branch.

Our Qube members have been working in this dust for years and could possibly face the asbestosis of the 21st century in silica exposure which is killing people my age in their 30s.

We will soon be holding a workshop and detailed information session put on for any interested members of the Branch which will be delivered by industry experts in this field.

The Branch took a decision in 2015 to move our personal injury cover across to Turner Freeman which to date has been a very good decision which has delivered the highest possible standards and support for injured members under the oversight of a bloke by the name of Thady Blundel.

Thady is a quiet, unassuming man who works extremely hard in representing workers in this space pursuing justice that monetary compensation can never cover.

He raised this issue of silica exposure with me directly when the team came to the Branch to get fitted out for the 2021 May Day shirts (which they sponsored 😊).

Turner Freeman are experts in dust related diseases which is something I'm very vocal about it given this killed my grandfather who was a proud P&D who's dying wish was to have the asbestos separated from his remains.

The Branch is currently taking the following steps:

1. Every member with previous exposure through the handling of clinker dust will be put on an exposure register with both Turner Freeman Lawyers and Workcover Queensland. A move that covers our members should they ever develop silicosis and puts the company on notice we are dead serious.
2. Qube are being pursued to fit workers with the appropriate respirators. We believe positive air is required.
3. WHS are being pursued to monitor the exposure both short term and long term along with measuring the degree of exposure at the workplace.
4. The Branch will be reviewing the work practices for handling clinker either with or without the support of the employer and will pull up the job should we deem the workplace to be unsafe.
5. Will continue to encourage members to put their hand up to help the current HSR reps and support both current and future safety outcomes for their workmates which will see the Branch resource as much training and education as possible.

There has been some positive and some negative feedback in the recent changes at Qube which we will continue to debate with the members as we advocate for a shakeup in some areas which we make no apologies for. This will include a 4 hour paid meeting with members to debate in a robust democratic fashion.

Assistant Secretary's Report *by Paul Petersen Hutchison*

The MUA members that run Hutchison ports have achieved a great agreement after three years of solid fighting for good conditions and wages.

Hutchison ports is one of the largest stevedoring companies in the world and is renowned as one of the most aggressive.

Hutchison have a despicable record of under paying workers and appalling safety in many countries they operate, one of the main examples is Jakarta where there has been multiple dockworkers killed during operations. Hutchison came to Australia with grand ideas of breaking down Australian dockworkers wages and conditions.

MUA delegates and officials from Brisbane and Sydney started negotiations against this company back in June 2018 and we have continued to struggle over the last

three years and achieved some great outcomes. The company first tried to move redundancy, long service leave and superannuation back to Award, they offered 0%,0%,0%,1% wage increase and they tried to replace our shift leader role with a management position.



The Brisbane and Sydney delegates/officials have worked in a cohesive and collective way throughout the three years of negotiations. Both Delegate Committees from Brisbane and Sydney have gone above and beyond the normal expectations of any negotiation team.



Brisbane and Sydney MUA members have taken a multitude of industrial protected action and strike action over the last three years negotiations. The collective

strength of all members pushed the largest stevedoring company in the world to concede to Australian union wages and conditions.

Every member and every delegate played a role by accepting short-term inconveniences to ensure all members got a good a long-term outcome.

Some of the outcomes are industry best practice and will set the benchmark for the future of all dockworkers across Australia.

Award

The company wanted to remove the underpinning Award. This has not happened and the Award is incorporated into the agreement consistent with industry standards.

Parties and Scope

This agreement alone in the stevedoring industry includes reference in scope to grades 1-7. The company wanted to remove our coverage of grade 7 work and we have been able to defeat that position and maintain our coverage.

Term

The agreement runs for four years from certification.

Consultation clause

This was another clause that was under attack by HPA. We managed to defeat this attack and have kept the superior clause in the agreement.

Technological Change

This is a world's best practice union clause. Nowhere in the world has such an outcome been achieved that protects all existing members against being terminated due to automation, mode change or technological development.

Categories of Employment

This is another win for the Union in that the separation of categories of employment clause across Part A and Part B limits the scope and capacity of the employer to bring in new categories of labour except by agreement.

Further to this all references to Phase I and Phase II have been removed for the document finally moving us away from the original start-up agreement.

Supplementary numbers have also been capped at both terminals preventing a flood of labour by the employer to undermine rosters and guarantees.

Recruitment and Promotion

This is another huge win for the Union. We have never formally achieved 70% recruitment of labour into a workplace. This allows us the opportunity to place sons, daughters, partners, husbands, wives, friends and union activists into positions within the company. No other workplace has this condition which sets a new standard across the stevedoring industry.

The **Selection criteria** is based solely on objective criteria. No more head-picking from bosses. It rules out industrial action as a disciplinary outcome which again has never been achieved. The ERC will make decisions based on

fairness if there is a tie-breaker required above the parameters in the clause.

ERC Committees

We have **increased** the number of **ERC members** nominated in the document. We have also identified the data we need for determining the potential for upgrades in rostering conditions within the document in six monthly labour reviews.

Training

We have achieved the appointment of 2 level 4 trainers in each workplace.

Inductions

We have won the right for the Union to conduct 2 hour Union inductions for any new employees.

Issue resolution

No other stevedoring agreement contains status quo for disputes which is in this clause.

Remuneration

We achieved five 2.5% wage increases over a four year agreement. Largely this is to deal with backpay which is illegal to take industrial action over but is considerable wage uplift over the agreement with rates that maintain industry standards.

The employer went hard to get Grade 2 permanents which has been defeated and removed from company draft of the agreement.

New supplementaries will work on the G2 rate for G2 work with rates that are again on par with industry standards despite the 25% reduction sought on rates by Hutchison which they did not get.

The clause also maintains all penalty factors and premiums in case of future attacks on the Award conditions.

The table nominates grading classification of which several are placed in higher grades than the award.

Superannuation

Superannuation has been maintained at 12% despite Hutchison's efforts to reduce it to 9.5%.



MSIC

We achieved two free spins over each six month period to prevent members being sent home off pay as is done in other areas.

Flexibility Term

We protected against Hutchison trying to include penalty rate and shift premium reductions in this clause.

Job Share

Another big gain for members with a job share clause which divides all entitlements and conditions in half allowing for those wishing to pursue less hours a chance to do so.

Effectively on rosters it will mean a 15 hour week in excess of 50k.

Domestic Violence

Setting a new social standard across the industry we have achieved 20 paid day domestic violence leave.

Union meetings

We now have three x four-hour meetings and a single two-hour yard meeting captured in the agreement.



Overtime

What gets delivered here is that overtime kicks in after 30 hours (or as prescribed in roster hours). The industry base for overtime is 35 hours.

Personal Leave

The company wanted to reduce sick leave pay to the base rate not at salary. We fought hard on this as a last issue were able to ensure we are paid salary for personal leave. We also maintained the 13 days personal leave after the company wanted to reduce the leave factor to 10 days.

Jury Duty

Unlimited jury duty payment which is usually limited in most agreements.

Parental leave

We achieved extensive parental leave provisions in the agreement including 1 week for non-birth parents including same sex couples.

Long Service Leave

We protected the 1.3 accrual rate for LSL when the company wanted to revert to the 0.866 rate of accrual. This maintain 13 weeks after 10 years not 13 weeks after 15 years.

Public Holiday

We have protected against attack from Hutchison the right to a day in lieu for working on a public holiday with it clearly identified in the agreement including for maintenance.

Continuous Operations

This provision was the basis of delivering full rostering in Sydney and roster in Brisbane for the first time. All safety critical roles have been protected during continuous

operations after significant pushback to have an open slather approach by the company.

PPE and Clothing

We pushed back and defended against Hutchison's attack on clothing and PPE where they wanted to remove half of our clothing issue and even items such as hearing protection.

Redundancy and Right of return

Not only did we protect the redundancy provision from reduction as Hutchison was seeking to take us back to the NES (max 12 weeks) but we have won the right to return back into the operation for those impacted by compulsory redundancy.

Workplace Health and Safety

This is an industry best practice clause that is very thorough and protects us on matters of safety disputes and the rights of WHS Committees and HSRs.

Committees are enshrined in the document as well as HSR numbers which are always under attack.

The clause includes the Stevedoring Code of Practice and even provides for training in the code of practice.

It further allows for the election of a safety facilitator on each operations shift in both terminals.

The safety clause includes the participation of your union officials to support safety disputes and issues.

To extend on this the **heat agreement** clause has been expanded to take into account other factors such as cold, wet, ice, hail, humidity, high winds, air quality, fog, low light levels and the presence of lightning.

Adverse Conditions

This is a new clause we won in the agreement that allows us the right to manage downturns in the industry through contractual changes and loss of work.

Instead of being made redundant as a first step it allows the workforce to consider alternatives to such as alterations to hours of work and rosters to prevent our comrades being made redundant.

Any changes must be voted on by a majority of the workplace and there is a guaranteed right to revert to the original conditions when the economic downturn or loss of work has been rectified.

Part Bs

The old agreement did not have separate Part Bs. These outline the conditions that apply specifically in each terminal. This includes the roster schedules and mooring in Brisbane for example which has increased rates.

The entire workforce in Sydney will move onto rosters except for a capped 30 supplementaries. The Brisbane roster is outlined which is a significant achievement based on a 30 hour week in a terminal with only 8% market share.

Very prescriptive roster rules apply as well as an order of pick to protect the roster and create fairness in their

application. This includes strong points equity systems as well.

Maintenance salaries have been defended against company wage cuts.

Contractors clauses are a huge win for the Union with significant protections against the use of contractors in maintenance.

There are changes to reefer manning in both terminals that comes as a trade-off for rosters, wages and other conditions won across the terminals. In doing this we have **maintained the G7 role** of which was the main claim of the company.

This is an exceptional agreement that delivers new standards across the stevedoring industry. It comes about through the sacrifices of the Hutchison membership and delegates who took countless hours of industrial action to defend and extend conditions of work at Hutchison terminals.



Touch one, Touch all 🙌

Programmed (Patrick) Maintenance EBA: Finalised

The MUA members and delegates that run Patrick maintenance work as a solid team and are backed up with outstanding delegates who have decades of industry experience. We started negotiations back in September 2020. With the dedication of the members and delegates we were able to achieve some good outcomes.

1. 2% pay increase from 1st January each year
 2. 3 year Agreement
 3. 0.5% increase in super contributions each year on 1st July
 4. 2 casuals to be made permanent part time, in line with Award conversion clause
 5. Adopt the 2020 Stevedoring Award
 6. Clause limiting days in lieu to accumulate to 13 before being asked to take access
 7. NES clause where and is better
- No changes to rosters or other conditions.

Vote result:

15 yes

0 no

The Branch would like to put a special thanks and send our gratitude too long serving and dedicated delegate

Shaun Bolton who has recently retired. Even though Shaun was close to retirement he stayed for the EBA negotiations and was an instrumental part to ensure the above achievements were made before he moved onto his retirement.

The work done by Brett Stokes, Michael Ryan and Dave Pilson have been outstanding! The wages and conditions achieved at this workplace have been through the hard work and dedication of delegates.

AAT Brisbane EBA

Are a strong unionised workforce led by a dedicated and humble delegate James Crookall.

These MUA members control all the bulk/general cargo receivable and delivery for Brisbane.

The EBA negotiation team lead by Warren Smith have been working closely with Port Kembla, Official Mick Cross and Victorian Branch Secretary Shane Stevens to put the Part A document together.

Some of the conditions members and delegates are fighting to achieve:

1. Pay rise 3% per year
2. Chiropractor or physio payments, reimbursements
3. Gear lockers for wet weather gear
4. Pandemic/emergency leave payments and clauses
5. Existing supps to GWE's
6. More training for supps
7. Personal income protection
8. First aid training for all
9. Better disclosure on maintenance schedules for machines eg: scheduled maintenance, problem, duration, rectification
10. Five sets of uniforms in issue
11. AAT trainer

We are aiming at trying to finalise the Agreement Part A (national) part B (local) by end of August.

Linx Brisbane

Part A and part B EBA negotiations have commenced nationally and locally.

Adrian Evans is leading the national negotiation team using the IBB (interest-based bargaining) forum. This essentially means EBA negotiation are held in front of a Commissioner from Fair Work and is recorded and documented.

Linx nationally are trying to amend the economics clause which is used to improve members working arrangements when economic times allow for it and equally it gives us a variety of opportunities to lessen the impact when shipping and volume down.

The Part B (Brisbane) delegates have had several meetings with the company and put forward the log of claims, and we are still in debate on these issues.

Members are seeking to have planned time off Meal supplied on the occasion a two hour or more extension is called on the day.

A minimum payment for members on a voluntary stand-by list.

Negotiations will continue and we will report back as it unfolds.

Sealink Gladstone Ferries EBA: Finalised

After months of negotiations where we demanded reasonable wages and conditions the company decided to put out an inferior EBA agreement to which the members rightly voted down.

The MUA continued pushing for 3% yearly pay increase from expiry of the current agreement. We believe this is reasonable to keep members slightly ahead of inflation.

MUA – Last on, first off to be from engagement of employment (years of service) not current category of employment.

An **Indigenous Traineeships** clause which set industry standards to be introduced to Sealink Gladstone with the priority employment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Clause to allow members to pay back any overpayment at an agreed amount.

Domestic violence, an employee is entitled to 5 days' unpaid leave to deal with family and domestic violence. 5 days leave is available each 12-month period, the leave does not accumulate.

The agreement has now been voted up by majority of MUA members.

The vote concluded on the morning of 5 May 2021, and we are pleased to advise that the agreement has been voted up.

Assistant Secretary's Report *by Paul Gallagher*

Delegate Training the Key to Our Future

During the week of 12th July, the Queensland Branch ran a series of delegate training that coincided with the Branch Committee meeting. This was well attended with excellent feedback from the wide range of MUA delegates. On Monday 12th a delegate introductory course was run focussing on members who are new to the delegates role or members perhaps new to the union and wishing to learn how to play their part in our union. The course was run by our expert trainers in union delegates Paul Williams from Patrick Terminal and Kerry Loose Jones from Hutchison Terminal. The history of the union of both the WWF and SUA were covered off in an excellent detailed session by ex long term MUA officials Col Davies and Mick Carr.

The feedback for this course was very encouraging and we have some exciting new delegates out there now so

another similar course will be organised in around three to four months.



Day two saw us head into QCU rooms for the Queensland Branch Committee meeting. The Branch Committee is made up of elected delegates from all MUA worksites in Queensland and as well is represented by our retired vets, women's committee, youth and ATSI members. This meeting included those new delegates as an introduction into the inner working of the Branch's democratic structure and to meet our current delegates. Officials gave industrial and campaign reports and the financial report showed that the Branch is growing into an even more healthy financial position than ever before. Delegates reported from their individual worksites which is extremely important as it keeps everyone abreast of each others issues around the state. The vets reported they are supporting a worthy charity called **Stand up step out!** The Brisbane tugs immediately moved to donate \$200 to the cause. (If other sites wish to donate see below details). There was a motion moved to support the Finch Family Maritime Museum in Kyogle North NSW. After discussion on the federal election campaign the committee moved a resolution to support the ALP candidate for Flynn Matt Burnett. Matt is the current Lord Mayor of Gladstone, a high profile candidate and a long time friend of the MUA. A good chance of winning with the incumbent stepping aside as well. The committee resolved to support Matt financially as well as people on the ground during the election campaign. It was a very positive meeting and there was some solidarity drinks in the evening with the delegates which is equally as important.

Wednesday 14th started with more training for current and new delegates with a session on sexual harassment in the workplace. An excellent course, very current and relevant to the modern workplace and was delivered by Margot Hoyte from the Queensland Council of Unions. The afternoon had a full report from comrade Thomas Mayor on our current national indigenous campaigns. This included a report on the Wave Hill walk off and our unions involvement in supporting that strike of 200

Aboriginal workers that brought about an end to slavery and disgusting living conditions endured by the Gurrinji people. Thomas also spoke about our position in supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart. After that we had a very interesting visit from a gentleman named Alan Lui to speak about cultural awareness with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. Alan is brother to comrade Mikey O'Shane and a Torres Strait Island man. Alan has years of experience in this space and has been speaking at universities and writing papers on the subject. The delegates got a lot from his stories it gave everyone a deeper inside understanding of the oldest culture in the world.

Thursday 15th played host to a one day refresher course for our Health and Safety Representatives. Most importantly, if you are a trained HSR you must complete the one day refresher course after three years or you have to do the full 5 day course again. We recommend this course yearly. It is delivered by our trainer and safety guru Paul Williams. While the course covers off on all the latest legislation and requirements it is tailor made for maritime workers and our every day safety challenges on the waterfront.

Comrades this Branch feels strongly that our delegates are our most important asset. Officials could simply not do our job to such an affect without the role the workplace delegate plays. They are the link between the members and their union. They help maintain unity and they assist in keeping the boss accountable to the members. The role delegates play in our Branch Committee keeps us a strong and united Branch for what they bring to the committee and what they take back to the rank and file is absolutely priceless. This strength is why we are feared by the bosses and respected where ever we go. That is why we support our delegates. That is why we invest in our delegates. Knowledge is power. This is why members must support their delegates and remember they do this important work in their own time.

In unity - Paul Gallagher

Assistant Branch Secretary - Branch Presiding Officer

Footprints

<https://www.facebook.com/SUSOstandupstepout/>

<https://footprintsinc.org.au/how-you-can-help/>

Who We Are

Footprints in Brisbane Inc. is a well-regarded not-for-profit provider of community-based services, working in the community for over 30 years. We specialise in working with older people, those that experience disability, mental illness, as well as those who are at risk of homelessness.

Footprints adopts a non-discriminatory practice and working alongside people with respect and dignity, to enhance their capacity to live independently in the community, is integral to our service.

Our professionally qualified and highly skilled workforce operate within a client centred practice framework ensuring principles of strengths-based practice are implemented into service delivery.

We believe in independence, strength and choice. We work with people and their representatives, at their own pace, to empower and support people to reach their goals.

Mackay in July

What a week in the Queensland Branch of the mighty MUA. I travelled to Mackay to attend the first “Mackay in July” with Queensland Council of Unions and ACTU Sally McManus.



Over three days we rallied George Christiansen’s office, worksite visits and launched the new campaign which is “Secure Work - Worth Fighting For” at a packed town hall meeting. While in town I met with Daltug employees to discuss upcoming EBA, new pilot boat members where we are doing a first ever union EBA and travelled to Bowen tugs to report on their transition to a new employer.



Also touching base with traditional owners from Juru whom we are working with on marine traineeships at Abbot Point.

QCU NAIDOC Week Awards

we had the pleasure of attending QCU NAIDOC awards in Brisbane. Both the MUA as a union and comrade Mikey O’Shane as a Murrie activist received Highly Commended Awards. Queensland Branch on top of their game!



MUA Nomination for: QCU NAIDOC UNION AWARD

The MUA has not only done an extensive amount of organising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in Queensland, but the union has been at the forefront in the fight for constitutional change to enshrine First Nations Voices in the centre of decision making nationally. The union seconded the Northern Territory Branch Secretary, Thomas Mayor, a Torres Strait Islander man, to the movement for a Voice as called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. He is now employed as National Indigenous Officer. The union has also seen prominent rank and file campaigners for a Voice, including Vicki Morta, Terry O’Shane and Michael O’Shane. Michael O’Shane is now Acting Assistant QLD Branch Secretary.

The MUA is also fighting from the front against Fracking and other activities on country without Traditional Owner consent. In QLD, NSW and the Northern Territory the union has been active in organizing rallies, speaking in the media and making statements in inquiries. This continues a long history of the MUA using our power for more than our own wages and conditions.

Across the nation, the MUA has been increasing its First Nations membership through bargaining and holding employers accountable. In Western Australia, during the Gorgon Project the union negotiated to have 20% of waterside workers as Indigenous identified positions, secured in a legally binding Deed of Agreement. In NSW, stevedoring agreements have recruitment clauses that transparently ensure First Nations people from local Indigenous communities are employed. In QLD, great work is being done on establishing social compacts with

First Nations to formalise relationships with unions and to ensure that the greatest possible leverage is being applied to employers for outcomes for communities. The MUA has achieved much of the above due to the political and social awareness that members have.



Our delegate training in Branches such as the Queensland Branch, and nationally, ensures that members understand colonization and racism, their impacts on First Nations peoples and the national psyche, and why we need structural and political change.

Finally, the MUA has recently committed to accepting the Uluru Statement from the Heart by enshrining First Nations Voices in our own constitution, as is called for nationally in the Australian constitution. The MUA National Council has committed to including an additional Assistant National Secretary position that only Indigenous members may nominate for.

Uncle Bob Anderson Award

Mikey is a great believer in the collective power of workers and will attend rallies whenever and wherever time allows. His recent attendance at the celebrations of May Day in Gladstone was topped off by his presentation, delivered in a speech, to those in attendance, on behalf of the MUA and the working class generally calling for workers to redouble their efforts and rid this country of the Morrison Government come the next election.

Mikey O'Shane was Queensland delegation leader at Parliament house Canberra on 22 – 24th June 2021 for the MUA Jobs Embassy campaigning politicians to reverse the demise of the Australian Merchant Navy. While there he led the delegation to the Aboriginal Tent Embassy to speak with and offer support for the First Nations elders and activists and a smoking ceremony at the fire that has burned on the lawns of parliament for 50 years.

Comrade O'Shane has the ability to listen, analyze and action the issues of workers when dealing with their

problems. He indicates the need for collaboration in these instances so that the workers themselves become confident in the process required to address their issues at the same time break down their hesitance when confronting the bosses about workplace matters which are being trampled on.

Mikey has the preparedness to take advice from older more experienced members bringing into play the lessons they have learned from industrial disputation and worker representation.

Mikey has addressed racism at the workplace and educated employers and workers alike on the effects racism and discrimination has on his people. He has expressed the same sentiments toward women in the workforce or any other minority group facing any kinds of discrimination.

Leadership is about taking the membership with you on the journey to industrial justice, as we say in the Union Movement: Touch One Touch All.



Mikey O'Shane is a First Nation Person, Mother from Masig (Yorke Island) in the Torres Straits (Zendath Kes) and Father a Kubirriwarra of the Yalanji Nation. Mikey is currently engaged with promoting Union Membership to the working men and women in the Torres Straits and from Quandamooka (Stradbroke Island) to Cairns (Gimuy) in the north. Mikey is promoting the use of Social Compacts that spell out the roles and responsibilities of all parties when engaging with First Nation People so that the weakness in the Reconciliation Action Plans or the MoU's are not used as a vehicle to exploit First Nation Peoples Native Title rights and interests. Mikey is a vocal opponent to the mind set and the partnership of capital and government as they prey on the poverty of First Nation Peoples to once again steal the land away from them with the promise of economic stability for the future of our communities when nothing could be further from the truth.

Mikey has picked up the baton since coming to work in the Queensland Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia as a relieving official and following a long line of

family traditions of wharfies and seafarers is working hard to ensure that existing workers are protected by union agreements at the same time pushing the boundaries for those working men and women employed in the more remote regions of Queensland.

Under the collective plan of the MUA Queensland Branch Mikey has travelled to Far North

Queensland as a part of our Seaswift campaign. He has signed up many FN workers to the union at Seaswift and educated them on our EBA campaign and creating a relationship between FN and their union which has created a scenario where we are being alerted to serious safety issues otherwise hidden by management. While working in the Torres Straits with our NQ organizer Mikey has expanded his travels to York Island and Bamaga to help us recruit members and bought his countryman into the union where the MUA are now negotiating Enterprise Agreements in brand new remote areas where there is a long history of exploitation, wage theft and dangerous conditions. The MUA are now drafting and negotiating Social Compacts to be implemented right across Queensland as a tripartisan contract between Traditional Owner Groups, the MUA and the Corporations who profit from their lands. We are currently working this concept into the TI, Cairns, Townsville, Abbot Point, Gladstone, Stradbroke Island as a starting point. Mikey has brought the union to remote FNQ and brought those indigenous and non indigenous workers to us. He has always carried out these duties in a comradely manner operation on working class principles and passion for the cause for justice for all workers with first nations workers close to his heart.

Mikey O'Shane is a suitable nomination given his long history in the Union Movement, his dedication to the rights of workers and to First Nation Peoples has seen Mikey bring a new dynamic to the field in developing the concept of Social Compacts between First Nation People, the MUA and other parties, as we go into these celebrations the MUA, the ETU, ENERGEX and the Quandamooka Mob are finalizing documentation that will see a commitment from all parties to provide ongoing employment opportunities for those men and women of

Minjerribah Moorgumpin, Mikey is also heavily involved with the crews on the pilot services in the Torres Straits, their conditions are a total travesty and Mikey has committed himself, with the support of the Queensland Branch of the MUA, to right the wrongs of this situation. He is understanding of the long path going forward and that this commitment is a lifetime event, he is proud to be nominated for the Bob Anderson Award as he has enormous respect for Uncle Bob and his lifelong commitment to the struggle of the working class, Bob is no stranger to Mikey's Family due to Bobs days as an

organizer in the BWIU and as an activist with the Aboriginal Advancement League along with Joe McGinnis and his Grandmother Gladys O'Shane.

We have included a report from Mikey himself in his own words which capture the nature of the man and his achievements and goals spelled out in detail.

(Please also find attached Michael's comprehensive report on activities in Far North Queensland the and May Day Speech delivered in Gladstone this year.)

Silica – The Rediscovered Danger

by Thady Blundell – Turner Freeman Lawyers

Silica is a very common mineral and it is found in soil, sand, granite, cement, concrete, rock and many other materials.

Silica, if inhaled, is a toxic substance and it can easily be inhaled during the course of any handling of silica containing materials.

Different types of materials can contain different amounts of silica as follows:-

- Demolition dust – 3% to 4% silica
- Brick – up to 30% silica
- Ceramic tile – 5% to 45% silica
- Granite – 20% to 45% silica
- Concrete, mortar – 25% to 70% silica
- Natural sandstone – 70% to 95% silica
- Engineered stone – up to 95% silica

Silicosis can be a result of inhaling silica. It is a scarring of the lung tissue that arises from repeated exposure to silica dust. The greater the intensity of the exposure and the longer the duration, the greater the risk of silicosis developing.

Recent research results have shown that inhalation of silica dust can cause chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and emphysema, both lung related conditions which historically have been more associated with cigarette smoking. Silica exposure now seems to have been a major cause of these conditions in those occupationally exposed to silica.

Silicosis is a known consequence of silica exposure since ancient times. In New South Wales a compensation body was founded in 1942, which was known as the Silicosis Board, to compensate workers with silica exposure and there was a high incidence of silicosis in workers jackhammering and working with Sydney sandstone. Over time, the incidence of silicosis began to decline and asbestos related disease became much more prominent and the focus in recent times has been on preventing asbestos exposure and banning products containing asbestos. Silica exposure has potentially been overlooked.

There has been much recent attention on silicosis because of the use of engineered stone in kitchen benchtops. Engineered stone is a manufactured stone

which have tended to replace natural stone for kitchen benchtops. Whilst these are relatively inexpensive and easier to work with than natural stone (marble contains only 2% silica), they contain extremely high levels of silica – up to 95%. Unsafe cutting practices has led to an epidemic of diagnoses of severe silicosis in young stonemasons. While focus on this industry has hopefully led to safe practices being adopted, the risk of silica exposure is not confined to stonemasons working with engineered stone, as silica is so widespread in products, particularly those used in the construction industry.

Cement and concrete products have high silica content. Any handling or working with sand, cement, clinker or concrete products which leads to dust in the air gives rise to risk of silica inhalation and risk of lung disease, particularly if the exposure is ongoing.

Simple respiratory protection, such as "white paper masks", would be ineffective in preventing silica exposure if there is significant levels of silica dust in the air.

The historical message in occupational lung disease was "all dust is dangerous" and this message is still relevant today – any dust inhalation in the workplace should be avoided, particularly in products containing silica.

Please click on the below link for further factsheet information on 'Silica and the Lung'.

https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/17238/silica-lung-factsheet.pdf

Thady Blundell – Turner Freeman Lawyers

Relief Official's Report by Aaron Johnston

There has been a number of incidents and near misses across the terminals recently so it is timely to revisit safety and your rights at work. It is easy to lay blame on the bosses and our employers and their known lack of true commitment to our health, well being and ability go home safe after every shift. We all see the posters and their apparent lip service. So given we know this, it is up to us to ensure our workplaces are safe, that policies and procedures are in place and adhered to, that you and your workmates go home to your families injury free. As workers you do not have to tolerate unsafe working conditions and whilst our roles can at times involve an element of risk, at all times it should never be at a level that poses a threat to your physical or mental health. Safety in the workplace is about identifying risks and managing those risks to avoid accidents and incidents. Through appropriate procedures, risk assessments and take 5's on the job the removal or mitigation of those risks can and should occur.

It is now the time to take a look at your worksite. Do you have the required number of suitable trained HSR's? A safety committee that meets regularly? Are procedures revised and updated and are your HSR's involved in their development through consultation? When there is an

incident are the HSR's involved in the investigation with the workforce being informed of the outcome? These are all rights that you have under the Workplace Health and Safety Act. If you think or feel some or all of this is not occurring contact the Branch and we can assist with resolving the situation.

When managing risks to your health and safety the duty holder or the person conducting business or undertaking (PCBU), meaning your employer must:

- eliminate risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable; and
- if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks to health and safety—minimise those risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

When addressing identified risks, the hierarchy of controls should be used in order to eliminate and reduce these risks. The hierarchy of controls are to be systematically worked through when managing risks, with the aim of eliminating the hazard first and foremost, which is the most effective control.

This is where your Health and safety representatives (HSR) and health and safety committees (HSC) are essential, they provide the means for giving workers a voice in health and safety matters at the workplace. The employer must involve them in all matters through active participation and consultation. Additionally, the Act makes it clear that consultation must involve:

- the sharing information.
- giving workers the opportunity to express their views.
- and taking those views into account.

In other words, consultation is more than your employer just telling you what will happen. Consultation means considering the workers and committee views and reaching an agreement that takes into consideration their concerns. If this is unable to be achieved you have the right to seek assistance and input from the union which the PCBU cannot refuse and if still no resolution can be found it can be further escalated to involve WPHS.

The employer must consult with the workers in creating applicable work groups in order to give your site suitable coverage with appropriately qualified HSR's in each group. As above consultation is essential in this process and upon request the employer must involve the worker's representative (the union) in the negotiations. The PCBU must provide resources and assistance to carry out the election of HSR's from those employees that wish to nominate. Upon election the employer must pay for the initial 5 day course for the elected employees. The union has its own industry tailored and registered training provider which you can nominate to attend. Every 3 years thereafter a one day refresher course must be completed to remain registered. If you think your refresher is due the Branch is running a refresher course on the 15th July

which you can attend. The term of a HSR is three years, nothing prevents a HSR from renominating at the end of their term and if one resigns or leaves within those 3 years they must be replaced. In addition to the HSR's there is a requirement to have a health and safety committee (HSC). At a minimum half of the members of the HSC must be workers that have not been nominated by the PCBU and they must meet at least once every three months or at any reasonable time at the request of at least half of the members of the committee.

So, to be clear the employer or PCBU must:

- consult on work health and safety matters with any HSRs for the work group.
- pay all reasonable costs for relevant courses the HSR requests to attend without loss of pay.
- provide resources, facilities and assistance to enable the HSR to carry out their functions.
- allow a HSR to exercise their entitlements during their ordinary working hours.
- keep a current list of all HSRs and deputy HSRs and display a copy at the workplace.

Furthermore, elected HSR's are not personally liable for anything done, or not done, in good faith while carrying out their role and they are entitled to perform the following tasks:

- undertake workplace inspections.
- review the circumstances of workplace incidents and accidents.
- accompany a WHSQ inspector during an inspection.
- represent the work group in all health and safety matters.
- attend an interview about health and safety matters with a worker from the work group (with the consent of the worker).
- request that a health and safety committee be established.
- monitor compliance measures.
- investigate work health and safety complaints from work group members.
- issue provisional improvement notices and direct a worker to cease unsafe work (where the HSR has completed the approved training).

To reiterate if you feel any of the above is not being adhered to or your rights are not being respected contact the Branch and we can step in to assist. Your health and safety is always a priority.



“Hands off Cuba”: ITF Calls for End to Blockade After Protests

Demonstrations and protests in Cuba have highlighted the human cost of the unjust and punitive trade blockade against the working people of Cuba.

The International Transport Workers' Federation today reiterates its call to end all trade embargo, one that continues to hurt working communities across Cuba.

The sixty-year blockade against Cuba has cost the country \$130 billion since 1962 (ECLAC, 2018).

The consequences of the longstanding trade embargo have been borne on the shoulders on Cuban citizens, which has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cuban transport workers, the Cuban trade union federation, and all workers have worked tirelessly to keep transport, the economy, society and their communities moving during this once-in-a-century crisis. They have done this despite the economic and trade restrictions Cuba unfairly endures.

“Over the past months as Covid-19 cases have surged in the country, shortages vaccines and basic medical supplies including syringes have loomed as a major challenges for the island. At the same time, Cuba has deployed and continues to develop vaccines and other coronavirus drugs that remain under embargo, with dire consequences on its economy and global fight for vaccine equality,” said Paddy Crumlin, ITF President.

“The ITF calls for national, regional and international reconciliation and cooperation to end the trade blockade and resolve the economic, political, social and health crisis that is being forced upon the working people of Cuba,” said Crumlin.

The ITF wholeheartedly supports people's fundamental right to freedom of assembly, association and the legitimacy of peaceful protest.

Edgar Diaz, ITF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Secretary said: “The ITF and its 20 million transport workers around the world support the Cuban trade union movement and say, “hands off Cuba”. It's time to end the blockade and let the working people of Cuba decide and determine their own future.”

At ITF's 43rd Congress in Sofia in 2014, the ITF committed to playing its part in promoting cooperation and engagement with Cuba and in seeking an end to the embargo of Cuba. The resolution recognises the sovereignty of the Cuban people and their right to determine their own destiny free from outside interference.

Women's Committee Report *by Kerryn Loose Jones*



Union women from across Queensland joined together for a dinner to celebrate the work of the unions and participants in the Anna Stewart Memorial Project at Muoz Restaurant in West End in June. Each year women activists and delegates are invited to participate in this two week internship that aims to develop leadership in union women. It is designed to encourage more women to be active in unions, they spend one week with their own union and the second at a different union. The Women's Committee are endeavouring to set up a timeline of events over the next 12 months and hope that we will have our first Anna Stewart participant involved in the project next year. So far on calendar are the following events I am sure these will be built upon. Our last women's breakfast sadly did not get off the ground. I will organise another date soon.

- May Labour Day Anna Stewart Project
- August Freedom Day Wave Hill
- September Emma Millar Awards
- November WIMDOI Conference - Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries
- Share the Dignity - In the bag collection
- QCU Women's Conference
- March Share the Dignity collection, International Women's day

Kerryn Loose Jones

Ann Holmes Report



Job Security is Paramount

What a fabulous swing I had onboard the Ocean Protector. It was the first time, in my ten years of seafaring, that I've experienced working with a crew who all had permanent positions.

That security had a huge, positive impact on morale, comradery, professionalism and job satisfaction. It was palpable. I could sense that unlike the vast majority of Australian seafarers, myself included, the Ocean Protector crew didn't have to manage the stress of not knowing when they'd get another pay check.

In addition, it appeared the crew had built deep connections with each other. There were often people laughing and always someone willing to give a helping hand. I assume this was because there was consistency. There was time to build true friendships, and develop work routines that satisfied everyone. More importantly, without the burden of having to constantly look for a new contract, the crew was relaxed, without malice and void of fear-based thinking.



Mental health begins with the basic concept of knowing you can feed your family, pay your bills, and enjoy the people you work alongside. Job security is paramount.

Ann Holmes

As the only MUA woman on the Ocean Protector I am always delighted when a sister joins. It was wonderful to work with Annie, a strong union woman of principle and integrity.

Ann is a lived example of a woman overcoming the many obstacles that are inherent in all male dominated industries.

She held her own on deck and then some.

All power to you Annie!

Vicki Helps - MUA WA Branch

Unity Bank Update

Did you know?

The sale of ME Bank to the Bank of Qld by its Industry Super Fund owners, which settles this month, means that the Maritime Industry is one of the few Industries left in Australia which still has its own Mutual Bank/Credit Union.

Many have changed tack to attract a broader and bigger member base in order to compete against mainstream banks.

With the support of as many industry members as possible, we will continue to assist Maritime members with loans and protect their financial situation in uncertain times, as we have always done.

A huge plus for Qld members recently, with an additional Relationship Manager Jason McKell coming aboard, to better cover the state with myself and make sure that if one of us is unavailable there will always be someone free.

Michael Randall

Relationship Manager Brisbane

M: 0422 250 630 | E: mrandall@unitybank.com.au | unitybank.com.au

Jason McKell

Relationship Manager Mackay

M: 0429 523 918 | E: jmckell@unitybank.com.au | unitybank.com.au

QCU Press Release: Unions Win 2.5 Percent Increase in National Minimum Wage

Unions have won a 2.5 per cent pay rise for 500,000 Queensland workers on award rates after today's Fair Work Commission minimum wage case decision. The federal commission increased the current minimum wage of \$19.84 hour to \$20.33 per hour, which is \$18.80 per week for a full-time worker on the minimum wage.

Around 2.2 million workers across the country will have more money in their pocket, but Australian Unions had been calling for a 3.5 per cent boost to the wages benchmark. Queensland Council of Unions General Secretary Michael Clifford said today's decision of 2.5 per cent will not be enough to make up for years of stagnant wages growth. Additionally, workers under industry awards in aviation, tourism, fitness and certain areas of retail will have to wait months to receive the increase.

In Queensland, almost half a million workers on awards are affected by today's decision.

On average, they currently make \$724.60 a week, compared with the national average of \$787.70.

However, unions are disappointed that the Commission has decided to delay this increase for hundreds of thousands of workers, including those in retail where many companies have posted record profits. "Limiting the wage rise to 2.5 per cent is an insult for many of the

low-paid workers who kept our economy going during this crisis – our cleaners, supermarket workers and delivery workers, our health and aged care workers. Workers in those industries had last year's 1.75 per cent minimum wage increase delayed by the Fair Work Commission. "Now they are doing it again to workers in other industries," he said.

The Commission has delayed the increase for aviation, fitness, tourism and parts of retail and events until the 1st of November and for the bulk of the retail sector until the 1st of September.

"Those workers should not miss out again on a pay rise when they need it most," he said.

"The wage growth problem has become worse with the largest surge of insecure jobs in our nation's history in the last six months," he said.

"Job insecurity feeds low wage growth. The federal budget assumes consumer spending will increase to recover from the impact of COVID-19 but how will it increase if wages are not growing quickly enough? "The recovery is being driven by consumer spending, which is unsustainable without decent wage rises and more job security for working people," he said. He condemned the Morrison Government failing to support a greater increase in the minimum wage. The 2.5 per cent increase is significantly higher than anything supported by either the Federal Government or big business.

"Perhaps the Coalition is more concerned with upsetting its friends in big business like Gerry Harvey who are putting their energies into arguing for pay cuts and wage freezes," said Mr Clifford. "We need a recovery which provides for the working people who carried us through the pandemic."

Unions Call for Paid 'Vaccination Leave' to Encourage Uptake of COVID Jobs

Source: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/06/11/vaccination-leave-australia/>



ACTU secretary Sally McManus has written to the government, asking for paid vaccination leave for workers. Photo: AAP

Australian workers should be given special 'vaccine leave' to get the job – and it should be paid for by the federal government. That's the stance from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, which says two paid leave days

– to get the job and recover from any side effects – would boost the country’s vaccination uptake.

It comes as federal health officials again urge calm and confidence in Australia’s vaccine portfolio, following a second death of a person who had recently received an AstraZeneca shot.

The ACTU has written to Prime Minister Scott Morrison with its concerns about the lagging vaccination rates among workers in aged and disability care.

The federal government last week could only confirm that some 40,000 aged-care staff (out of a workforce estimated in 2016 as numbering 366,000) had received their first jabs.

The true number is much higher, with many staff likely to have been vaccinated at GPs or mass clinics, but the federal government doesn’t have access to data from state-run sites.

In any case, experts believe there may be tens of thousands of such workers – meant to be in the highest-priority Phase 1a of the rollout – still waiting for a job.

ACTU secretary Sally McManus said the government needed to do more to encourage and support aged and disability care workers to get a jab, including offering them paid leave and paid travel time to and from the clinics.



Workers should get ‘vaccination leave’ to encourage vaccine uptake, ACTU says. Photo: AAP

“Introduce special paid vaccination leave that would provide for up to two days leave to attend vaccination and recover from any side effects,” Ms McManus suggested, in her letter to Mr Morrison.

“The absence of paid leave is likely to impact the rate of vaccination uptake across these sectors.

“A provision for paid leave to attend and recover, as is available to other workers in priority sectors, would help ensure these essential workers become vaccinated.”

Currently, workers would be able to access normal sick leave or personal leave in order to get a vaccine, or recover from possible side effects. But Ms McManus said

the aged and disability care sectors, in particular, were “characterised by high levels of insecure and casual work”, meaning many employees may not have access to paid leave.

Some companies, in a bid to get their workforces vaccinated, are offering their own individual vaccination support schemes. The ACTU says a special government scheme, applicable to all workplaces, would boost uptake in the critical aged and disability workforce.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation said it had been urging the federal government to institute such paid vaccination leave schemes for months. The ACTU said its current request was specific to the care sectors, but didn’t rule out issuing further suggestions for other industries as the rollout continues.

The ACTU is also calling for the government to re-establish its earlier promise to vaccinate staff inside the centres they work in, or provide “paid travel time” for those who need to travel off-site to get their jabs. Ms McManus said it was a fair request.

“Other than the approximate 10 per cent of aged-care workers who have received surplus doses, aged care and disability support workers have not been given the opportunity, as was promised, to be vaccinated in the workplace (via Commonwealth-run in-reach programs),” she wrote.

“Workplace vaccination must be available for workers across aged care and disability support, as was promised by the government ahead of the rollout commencing ... To achieve the high rates of vaccination needed to ensure community protection, it is critical that workplace vaccination is readily available.”

The New Daily approached Industrial Relations Minister Michaelia Cash for comment.



Vaccination leave has been called for by unions for months. Photo: AAP

Ms McManus said the ACTU supported expert health advice, that making COVID vaccination mandatory for aged and disability care staff was not necessary. Instead, she said the government should be making vaccines more available.

“There is no evidence that workers in this sector are unwilling to be vaccinated,” Ms McManus wrote. “The experience of the Victorian public sector aged care highlights that where workers are supported with ready access to vaccinations and paid leave to receive their vaccination and recover from routine side effects, we can achieve very high rates of vaccination.”

Vaccination uptake and confidence has been a key concern among health authorities in recent months. Australia notched up 5.48 million vaccinations on Thursday.

Michael Pascoe: RBA Chief Slams Business Mindset of Wage Stinginess

Source: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/2021/06/18/minimum-wage-rise-rba/>

It has taken him five years, but Reserve Bank governor Philip Lowe has finally nailed the key domestic problem with low wages growth: Business’ mindset, a decade-long ingrained resistance to granting decent wage increases, the capital wages growth strike, stinginess.



Michael Pascoe says the 2.5 per cent minimum wage rise will be behind inflation even before it starts to be paid. Photo: TND

And in the process Dr Lowe has effectively poured scorn on the business lobby’s miserly response to this week’s minimum wage rise.

In a major speech in Toowoomba on Thursday just before the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its much-stronger-than-expected employment numbers, the governor zeroed in on wages failing to rise even when the labour market is tight.

“It is noteworthy that even in those pockets where firms are finding it hardest to hire workers, wage increases are mostly modest,” he said. “There are some exceptions to this, but they are fairly isolated.”

Barely a day goes by without employers complaining about a shortage of skilled workers, something Dr Lowe noted as restricting output, but business is still resisting the obvious market forces solution – pay more.



RBA governor Philip Lowe says business is resisting the obvious market forces solution of paying more.

Dr Lowe gave a speech five years ago that displayed dismal knowledge of the real world of suppressed wages. **At the time, I called it the worst speech I’d read by a governor.**

He’s caught up, explicitly recognising cost reduction as “the predominant mindset of many businesses”.

“This mindset can be helpful in making businesses more efficient, but it also has the effect of making wages and prices less responsive to economic conditions,” he said.

Dr Lowe attributed the attitude to scarring from the resources boom days when the Australian dollar was worth more than the US dollar, resulting in many businesses saying our cost structure, including labour costs, was uncompetitive.

“This experience has left a lasting imprint on many businesses and it has reinforced the narrative about the importance of cost control,” he said.

“Against this background, the economy is now recovering from the pandemic and some firms are finding themselves facing labour shortages. At least some of these businesses face a choice: Do they increase wages in an effort to attract new employees and put up their prices or do they pursue another strategy?

“Many firms are choosing this second option, relying on non-wage strategies to retain and attract staff. Some are also adopting a ‘wait and ration’ approach: Wait until labour market conditions ease, perhaps when the borders reopen, and until then, ration output.”

With this business mindset along with globalisation, technology and industrial relations changes depressing wages, Dr Lowe said there was limited upward pressure on wages even in tight labour markets.



That won't be overcome "until a tight national labour market is sustained for some time" – RBA-speak for "some years".

[That business mindset was on full display this week as the various lobby groups decried the 2.5 per cent increase in the minimum wage](#) to be phased in from next month.

[The national employer association, Ai Group, was typical:](#) "A 2.5 per cent minimum wage increase is unwarranted when the latest inflation figure is 1.1 per cent and with wages across the economy only rising at an average rate of 1.5 per cent."

Citing the year-to-March Consumer Price Index figure is cute – it was artificially lowered by emergency COVID measures and is about to snap back, as Dr Lowe spelt out on Thursday. He expects year-ended inflation will spike to "around 3.5 per cent" at the end of the June quarter.

The 2.5 per cent minimum wage rise will be behind inflation even before it starts to be paid.

But, of course, it's actually much, much worse than that in the real world, the after-tax and after-transfer reality glibly overlooked by nearly everybody.

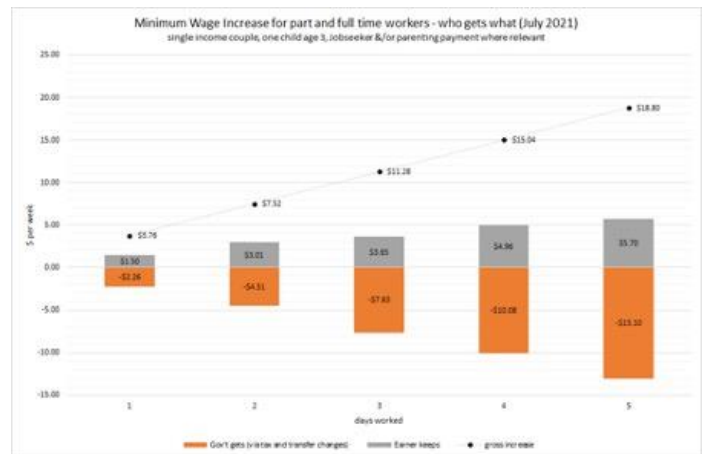
[The fine print at the back of the government's own submission to the Fair Work Commission quietly acknowledged that reality.](#) It showed that last year's nominal 1.75 per cent increase in the minimum wage was no increase at all in disposable income.

For a single person with no children (and therefore with minimal interaction with social security), that supposed \$13-a-week increase became \$11 after tax – a 1.48 per cent rise.

That was about as good as it got. A single parent working full-time on the minimum wage with a three-year-old child only received \$5 of that theoretical \$13 increase.

A single-income couple with one full-time minimum wage, the other on JobSeeker, only increased their disposable income by \$2. Put another way, they only retained 18 per cent of the increase.

David Plunkett, a master of the complicated interaction of our tax and transfer system, has been calculating how much the 2.5 per cent rise will be worth.



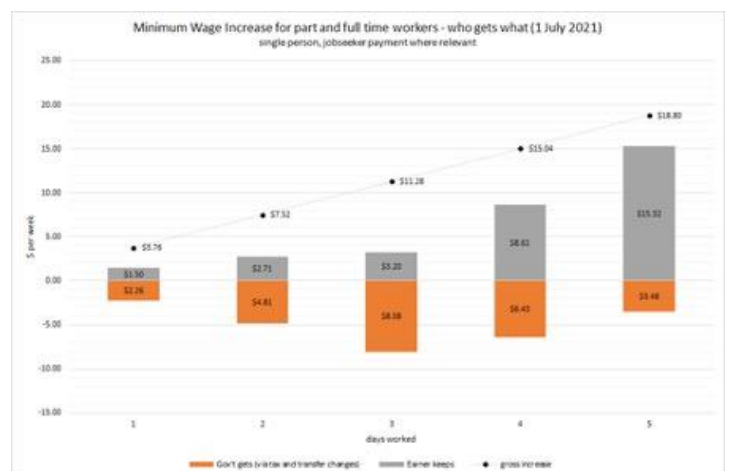
Source: David Plunkett

For a single-income couple on the minimum wage with a three-year-old child, the 2.5 per cent pre-tax, pre-social security rise of \$18.80 a week becomes only \$5.70 extra in the hand – a rise of less than 0.8 per cent, less than a quarter of the RBA's expected 2020-21 inflation rate.

In the real world of a single person on JobSeeker working three shifts a week on the minimum wage, the theoretical 2.5 per cent rise of \$11.28 a week turns into \$3.20 – the government gets the rest.

The 2.5 per cent minimum wage increase flows on to some two million people on awards.

How much they actually get will depend on their individual marginal tax rate and whether they receive any government assistance – but it will be substantially less than the inflation rate.



Source: David Plunkett

A 2.5 per cent increase in the wages bill plus the 0.5 per cent increase in the superannuation guarantee levy will be difficult for some businesses that are only marginally profitable now.

It will also be a breeze for many businesses that are enjoying an economy that is actually booming on many fronts with overall business profitability soaring.

It is typical of the business lobby, the business mindset, to complain about having to award labour a larger share of the larger pie, to pretend that all businesses are faring as badly as those that might not survive.

Eventually though, that attitude is not sustainable. Our consumption-led recovery depends on decent wage growth after the present COVID sugar hit passes.

If market forces are allowed to work, business will eventually have to be prepared to pay more for labour, either passing on that extra cost in higher prices or absorbing it in the profit margin or a bit of both.

But for now, the very well-paid business lobby will stamp its collective foot and increase its demand for the government to allow in foreign workers as quickly as possible.

Well, at least the RBA is now awake to the game. We're yet to see if the Morrison government is.

Branch Officials Contact Details

QLD Acting Branch Secretary Jason Miners

Mob: 0401 211 866

Email: jason.miners@mua.org.au

QLD Assistant Branch Secretary Paul Gallagher

Mob: 0408 494 168

Email: paul.gallagher@mua.org.au

QLD Assistant Branch Secretary Paul Petersen

Mob: 0404 453 869

Email: paul.petersen@mua.org.au

QLD Nth Qld Organiser Dave Lyon

Mob: 0439 348 545

Email: dave.lyon@mua.org.au

QLD Relief Official Michael O'Shane

Mob: 0402 169 426

Email: mick.oshane@mua.org.au

Notice of Application for Exemption from Holding an Election

Members of the Seamen's Union of Australasia Queensland Branch Union of Employees (SUAQ) are notified in accordance with *Industrial Relations Regulation 2018* that the SUAQ intends to make an application to the Queensland Industrial Registrar to obtain an exemption from holding an election.

The SUAQ is a registered union under the Queensland *Industrial Relations Act*. The MUA is separately registered as a Division of the CFMMEU under the Commonwealth *Fair Work Acts*. It is necessary to maintain both registrations to ensure the unions can effectively operate in both State and Federal IR systems.

The State and Federal IR systems allow state unions who have a "counterpart federal body" to be exempted from holding elections for offices for which a federal election has already been held. The MUA is the SUAQ's counterpart federal body. For many years the SUAQ has obtained exemptions from holding elections so that the holders of the MUA Branch offices of Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretaries can hold the same honorary positions in the SUAQ without the need to run a separate set of elections.

SUAQ members have not been, and will not be, disadvantaged by not holding separate elections for its honorary positions because SUAQ members can stand for office and vote in the MUA elections for the corresponding MUA offices.

Any queries please contact the Branch.

