



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

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No.11. Wednesday 19 August 2015

Workers hold the line as Hutchison tries to “crash” terminals

ON THURSDAY 20 August the Fair Work Commission is due to hear the union's case against Hutchison's sacking of 97 workers by sending them text messages and emails at 11:30pm on 6 August saying they were out of work from the following morning.

There are also discussions in the union about adding the further complaint to the Fair Work Commission that Hutchison is deliberately “crashing” its terminals by subcontracting out all its customers.

By doing so it is subverting both its agreement with the union and the Federal Court order on 13 August returning the 97 to payroll (though not yet into the workplace) pending negotiations.

On 31 August the Federal Court will reconvene for further hearings of the the union's case there against the sackings.

Union success at DP World

IN NEGOTIATIONS last week the MUA succeeded on all three outstanding issues in Part B of the DP World EBA.

As previously reported in this newsletter, these were:

“1. Shift cancellations - when shifts are cancelled on Thursdays, they want to be able to move them to Friday night.

“2. We're claiming a self-funded increase in payment for straddle operation. DP World have agreed it for some workers; we say it should apply to all.

“3. Shift premiums in Week 7 rosters”.

DP World had been obstructive on these issues for 19 months. Then last week the DP World members balloted for protected industrial action.

Whatever Hutchison do, we'll stand firm one day more than them

LISTEN TO and share Phil Monsour's song for the MUA: bit.ly/phil-m

Follow and promote the campaign on social media

UP TO THE MINUTE reports and pictures on the "Hutchison Ports - Stop Union Busting" Facebook page, on.fb.me/1PajABU

Even though the action was postponed, local DP World bosses quickly brought in a manager from Melbourne, and the union was able to settle the issues with little delay.

Management will often spin things out even when there is really very little cost to them in agreeing. In such cases, only union action, or the threat of it, will budge them.

Holding the line

AS OF MONDAY 17 August, Hutchison's seem to be taking in no containers for export, and their managers have told the union they expect no ships in this week.

They are bringing trucks in only to remove containers already in the terminals, often to transfer them to other operators for export.

This action must be bringing Hutchison's big losses. Their aim must be to “crash” the terminals, either to break the workforce and restart with cheap, overworked, unsafe labour, or to write off losses and sell the terminals cheap to another operator.

Workers are holding the line. The 24/7 community assembly at the terminal gates continues. Following interim orders from the Fair Work Commission, workers on shift inside the terminal are not taking industrial action, but they are insisting on strict compliance on safety issues neglected for some time.

On Monday 17 August management sent away empty all the early-morning trucks which arrived at the terminal to take away containers.

Seaswift

ASSISTANT Branch Secretary Paul Gallagher reports: During my visit on the weekend 14th - 16th it was clear to me that long term non-union company Seaswift have underpaid and overworked their workforce for too long.

Due to some excellent work by our organisers over the last few years these workers have joined the MUA in large numbers and are organising themselves to try and achieve a better work agreement. After only three EBA meetings where negotiations were strained, the company put their version out to vote.

Problem for the seagoing workforce was that Seaswift based their agreement on the inferior "Ports Harbours & enclosed waters award" and the vote included its entire workforce including shore based workers and even management. They then embarked on a "vote yes" campaign threatening the workers that the union would destroy the company and a no vote would see them return to a 4 and 2 roster. The company also refused indigenous representatives at the table or a clause to cover the ATSI workers who also cover a large part of their seagoing operations. To the disappointment of the seafarers the agreement got up.

Next Thursday 27 August, in Cairns, the MUA are taking Seaswift to court to appeal the situation. The MUA are seeking to put these members on the Seagoing Industry Award which locks in better terms and conditions.

Seaswift employ over 300 people (180 in shipping) and trade between Cairns and Torres Strait up through the reef and supply around 35 different remote islands and locations. They have recently gone into the Northern Territory and taken on Toll, driving prices down. It's looking like Seaswift will win that one. I believe this company has a big future in coastal trade. They employ around 24 cadets.

My dealings with management have given me the impression that they have held the upper hand for so long that they will go to extremes to maintain control. Now they have the MUA to deal with. They will just have to get used to it.

Speaking with members up there, they are not looking to stick the show up over a packet of biscuits. All they seek is the protection of a quality union agreement which locks in a decent wage and industry standard rosters and conditions. With a positive result from the judge next week, hopefully Seaswift and the MUA can negotiate in good faith to achieve this.

Blame the airport?

THE "JOURNAL of Commerce" website reports: "One industry source has said that HPA is planning to close the Sydney terminal

altogether as a result of air draft restrictions caused by its proximity to Sydney International Airport that make it impossible for the terminal to accommodate the large ships most commonly deployed on the trade by carriers.

"HPA has been struggling after failing to lock in a third terminal in Melbourne and is uncompetitive in Sydney as DP World holds the lion's share of the market with 53 percent followed by Asciano's 44 percent, leaving Hutchison with only 3 percent, according to the Australian Financial Review".

Ferries

DEPUTY BRANCH secretary Jason Miners reports: Tuesday 11 August saw another meeting between the MUA and Transdev.

The parties are still some way from reaching agreement as Transdev want to bring in new rostering and diminished penalty rates and allowances for no other reason than they think they can to make an extra quid.

Members and delegates who were concerned about their treatment decided to meet at the union rooms to discuss what options they saw fit to proceed and the option of protected action seemed to be the best way forward.

Delegates are now taking the company position back to the rank and file and asking what steps the workers are willing to take to secure a better deal for ferry workers.

Membership is on the rise and workers are starting to get sick of the way negotiations are leading when all they want is a fair pay rise for the good service they provide.

Branch Officials' details

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Paul Petersen, 0404 453 869,

paulpetersen4@gmail.com, is currently helping out in the branch office.

Deputy Branch Secretary Jason Miners is overseas until 4 September.

Join the community assemblies! Show solidarity!

Brisbane: Curlew Street, Berth 11
Fisherman Island.

Sydney: Gate B150 Sirius Rd, Port Botany
(access via Foreshore Rd)

The assemblies will run 24/7, so come any time.