



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

73 SOUTHGATE AVE, CANNON HILL 4170 - Phone: (07) 3395 7215 - Fax: (07) 3395 7688 - Email: muaqlld@mua.org.au

No.12. Wednesday 26 August 2015

High time for straight answers from Hutchison

ON WEDNESDAY 26 August Hutchison's regional boss, Mark Jack, returns to Sydney for a further session in the Fair Work Commission on 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.

The union is pressing for full reinstatement of the 97 (not just putting them back on pay for a few weeks, as ordered by the Federal Court on 13 August) and a voluntary redundancy program with decent pay-outs. The union is willing to discuss with Hutchison about redressing losses at the terminals. *But* that must be on the basis of full information from Hutchison about its accounts and calculations and objective selection criteria if, after all else has been explored, it comes to redundancies.

After previous sessions in the Fair Work Commission Mark Jack returned to Hutchison head office in Hong Kong for consultations. He is now due to bring back definite answers.

Ramping up the community assemblies

IF ON WEDNESDAY 26th Hutchison continue to be evasive and play for time, then the motto with which we started the dispute comes into play. However long Hutchison can hold out, we will hold out one day longer.

We'll need to discuss ramping up the community assemblies again to a formidable force, with support from other unions.

Hutchison want us to believe that they will shut down the terminals indefinitely if the union does not capitulate. They can certainly put the terminals in neutral gear for some weeks - they've already done that - or even a few months.

But they have \$750 million invested. They can't afford to walk away from that. If we gear up and sustain our campaign, we will win.



Already underway this week, are protests at Vodafone stores. Vodafone Australia is 50% owned by Hutchison.

Not-so-secret army

ASSISTANT BRANCH secretary Paul Gallagher writes: Campaign intensive was a resounding success. The Victorian branch and national campaigns coordinator Samantha Bond put on a top shelf couple of days of training and solidarity sessions.

Our Queensland members all made the branch proud and will be delivering a presentation at all upcoming rank and file meetings around the State and put our national plan in to action, all gearing up toward the removal of the Abbott Government next year. Will report more in detail during the week as there are a few proposals for the branch to come out of the delegation.

Above is the photo that became our catch cry after *The Australian* newspaper reported on its front page that we were a "secret army" coming after the PM

and Ian Bray in his opening speech announced "well, it's no secret that we want a change of government".

Brisbane river ferries update

QUEENSLAND MUA relief official Paul Petersen writes: Transdev operates the ferries on the Brisbane river. It's a French-based international private, public transport provider with operations in 21 countries.

Transdev have a reputation around the world of trying to break down workers' wages and conditions. In Boston, USA, they have tried everything to bust the school bus drivers union, United Steelworkers Local 8751. The union represents some 700 Boston school bus drivers.

Transdev sacked four key delegates then put forward a proposal: forget about the four delegates and we will make significant improvements in the contract. The bargaining committee had none of it! Negotiators for the union made it clear that no agreement would be possible unless the four came back to work.

This is the same company we are dealing with here in Queensland. Fortunately the MUA has a good percentage of membership on the ferries and some strong, active and alert delegates aboard (thanks greatly to the hard work from the former Qld Assistant branch secretary, Paul Sheehan).

Our members have many concerns with what Transdev has put forward, ranging from rostering issues, casual loading concerns, to WPI and many more.

We'll be negotiating for a far better outcome for all members involved and are set to go back to the Commission in the near future.

The mothball blackmail

THE \$750 MILLION plus of Hutchison assets in the terminals are the union's negotiating counter. We want to see those assets being used again, but on terms agreed with the union and the workforce.

Hutchison's claim in negotiations has been that they make a loss for each extra container they move, and so unless they get what they want they're likely to mothball the whole operation.

In recent weeks, they have run down the terminals. They have subcontracted their customers to other operators, and gradually cleared almost all the containers out of the terminals. Seven containers for export came into the Brisbane terminal on 25 August, and one or two ships are said to be due next week, but that's all.

Maybe Hutchison have been making losses recently, overall. But the picture they're trying to put across, is

they would be happy mothballing the terminals for years, and there's no point protesting outside shut-down terminals, doesn't make sense.

The operations workforce in Brisbane approximately is 70, then an average wage cost per worker of \$95,000 a year. The terminal has been doing about 95,000 teu (twentyfoot equivalent unit) per year.

That gives an average operations labour cost per teu of \$70.

You would expect the terminal's costs to be higher than average because of poor terminal layout and low (therefore bitty) traffic. So that \$70 estimate fits well with an ACCC figure of \$57 average across the industry.

Even at \$140 a teu, the low rate which Hutchison have been quoting to some customers, and even taking into account port per-teu fees, electricity, variable maintenance and repair and renovation costs, that gives Hutchison a profit per extra container.

Maybe not enough to cover their fixed costs. Maybe not the figure of \$80 profit per teu which they must have calculated if they were to break even with the one-third of the port's container traffic which they aimed for (about 300,000 teu per year), but not an extra loss per extra teu moved.

For Hutchison, mothballing would almost certainly be a tactic to play for time and then, maybe after a couple of months, to announce that something had changed and they were selling out to another operator, going into a joint venture, or restarting with a new workforce.

Branch Officials' details

Branch Secretary Bob Carnegie

Phone: 0439 478 996.

Email: bob.carnegie@mua.org.au

Assistant Branch Secretary Paul Gallagher

Phone: 0408 494 168.

Email: paul.gallagher@mua.org.au

Relief official Paul Petersen

Phone: 0404 453 869.

Email: paulpetersen4@gmail.com.

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.