



# QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

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*To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing - Raymond Williams*

No. 85 – Friday 12 May 2017

## Branch Secretary's Report - Safety Alert Patricks - Ferry Bound for Disaster

Union Busting at BMA - One Song Our Union Launch - Branch News Commendation - Branch Car Rally

### Branch Secretary Report

THE BRANCH HAS been heavily involved in fighting fatigue and rostering issues on the Brisbane Ferries. Jason Miners – Deputy Branch Secretary, Damien McGarry – Growth Organiser and David Greene – Legal/Industrial Officer have received some very positive media stories and we continue the fight for members in this regard.

Paul Petersen – Organiser, has been, apart from all other issues, tied up in Gladstone with a battle to re-negotiate an EBA with SeaLink and also speaking to Patricks Bulk and General members about their new Agreement which is in the process of being negotiated.

Assistant Branch Secretary - Paul Gallagher has been in Canberra most of the week with four Queensland rank and filers fighting for the right of Australian seafarers to work in their own country.



Deputy Branch Secretary – Jason Miners is inspecting a dredge in Singapore. Dredging in the Queensland Branch is primarily the Branch Secretary's responsibility but I thought it would be a great opportunity for Jason to do an inspection to gain further experience and we have no doubt he will do a professional and thorough job.

Our Growth Organiser – Damien McGarry has been working tirelessly in assisting members and doing the difficult job of organising workers and selling the advantages of being in a union.

Our Legal/Industrial Officer – David Greene has been doing an outstanding job representing members of the Queensland and Northern Territory Branches in the



*David Greene Legal/Industrial Officer*

Commission and Federal Court.

Yesterday, David Greene, Bob Reed - our Barrister, Damien McGarry and I were tied up for most of the day in the Fair Work Commission on the Grain Corp matter which fundamentally, when all the bullshit is put aside, is simply about a group of workers (in our opinion, wharfies) who wish to have a union of their choice which has constitutional coverage representing their industrial interests.

As your Branch Secretary, I ordered out of our union rooms a particular maritime operator

who bold faced lied to Jason Miners and myself. In questions of integrity, I as the Branch Secretary of our union, will not have anyone, no matter how big and rich they are, renege on agreed positions.

For me the highlight of the week was a simple, lunch time job meeting at Qube in Brisbane. The Qube Bulk and General members are a great group of members, well organised amongst themselves. Jason, Damien and I all had a bigger bounce in our step after the meeting.

This little snippet of work done by your elected Officials and Organisers is just to let members know we are trying our best. We make mistakes and try to learn from them. If any members have any ideas on how we can improve things, never hesitate to give me a call or bring it up on the job, come up to the office or at a meeting. The more ideas and debate, the stronger we will become.

### Safety Alert - Patricks

THE FOLLOWING IS a safety alert from Patricks relating to an accident at Patrick's terminal last Wednesday 3 May 2017.

**Authorised by Bob Carnegie, Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Queensland Branch Secretary**

**73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170**

All workers were fortunately okay although the crane driver was of course shaken up although it was in no way attributable to him. The Branch goes on record congratulating all MUA members who worked very hard in rectifying a difficult situation. It's an example of a highly unionised and effective workforce and terminal management working together in a very professional way to repair a very difficult situation. Congratulations to all involved.

### Safety Alert – Near Miss / Damage



Issued: 09 May 2017

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2017, Crane 8 lifted a below deck 40ft container that was sitting on top of 2x 20ft containers. Unbeknown to all parties, a semi automatic twistlock was in the bottom of the 40ft container and attached to the 20' below.

At a point whilst lifting, the attached 20ft container disengaged from the twistlock and fell onto containers below. As a result, 3 containers needed recovering. All containers were recovered throughout the day.

The incident is currently under investigation.



**Safety Alert ... Safety Alert ...**

### Brisbane Ferries Safety Fears Raised After Recent South Bank Accident

Madura McCormack, *The Courier-Mail*  
10 May 2017 Sourced from

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/brisbane-ferries-safety-fears-raised-after-recent-south-bank-accident/news-story/23903f93a6055590fa2debb85f5fd027>

A BRISBANE ferry known for having throttle issues clipped a pontoon at South Bank and injured a passenger just hours after management allegedly ignored staff warnings the vessel was unfit for service.

*The Courier-Mail* understands the two most senior maintenance staff at operator Transdev Brisbane Ferries have resigned in the past month amid serious claims of unsafe practices and skippers being made to work fatigue-inducing 13-hour shifts.

Employees have also accused management of risking safety by rushing new staff through an incomplete and patchy training regimen.

Maritime Union Australia Queensland branch manager Damien McGarry said a litany of issues made it a disaster waiting to happen.



“We are supposed to be the best people on the water, so it’s unfortunate we are bound to Transdev cutting corners on maintenance and safety,” he said.

“The fatigue in the rosters is a concern too. We don’t want to see anything happen to our members, but of course we also have the public’s safety in mind.”

Minutes from an August 2016 Transdev Brisbane Ferries staff meeting, obtained by *The Courier-Mail*, reveal concerns were raised internally. “Due to a few incidents lately, she (employee) thinks staff are being pushed through too quickly,” the document read. “Some of the new staff have been getting shifts before completing training.” Mr McGarry said shoddy training had caused a lot of damage to an already under-maintained fleet.

Transdev employees said skippers and deckhands were forced to work from 4.30am to 7pm, with a four-hour break. In one case, a skipper worked a 13-hour shift with a 20-minute meal break. Transdev Brisbane Ferries said it abided by national safety standards and there were thorough investigation protocols for marine incidents.

“Transdev are confident that the standards of professionalism, training and overall delivery provide best practice,” a spokesman said. Brisbane City Council, which contracts Transdev, said it expected operations to meet all safety requirements and Fair Work laws. Transdev’s CityCats, CityFerrys and CityHoppers carry five million people a year. One man suffered a bump to his head after the South Bank incident on April 30.

### Union Busting at BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance

*Unions & Workers* 8 May 2017

Kaye Broom sourced from <https://redflag.org.au/node/5808>

PLACARDS READING “STOP WORKCHOICES ON WATER” and chants of “Sweet FA, BMA” accompanied the occupation of BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance’s (BMA) office in Brisbane on 26 April. BMA is the largest coking coal operator in the world.

The occupation was the latest union action in response to the sacking of the entire tug workforce at the Hay Point Coal terminal (near Mackay) in June 2016. BMA replaced its previous operator and awarded the tug contract to Rivotow Marine, which has hired a new workforce on individual agreements. Under these so-called partnership agreements, Rivotow’s employees are

not covered by the Fair Work Act. “BMA just introduced the partnership agreements to get the unions out of the workplace”, Lawrie, a retired seafarer, said.



Rivtow has operated non-union tug crews out of Port Hedland since November 2015, in competition with the MUA unionised contractor. In an interview with the *Daily Mercury*, MUA Queensland secretary Bob Carnegie explained how they work: “All workers employed by Rivtow are not employees

but are considered trustees of a partnership ... and so don't get any entitlements such as long service leave, sick leave or workers compensation”.

The union says that the partnership agreements are a form of sham contracting in which the employer disguises the employment relationship by calling employees independent contractors. Rivtow's arrangements have received support from the bosses' court. In April 2016 the Fair Work Commission ruled that the partnership agreements were not sham contracting.



Dan, a CFMEU delegate, said he was at the BMA occupation in solidarity with MUA members because “these partnership agreements are bad for unionised industry ... it's just the start, they'll try and introduce them into other industries”. Shell is already looking into the Rivtow model to bring in non-union boats to service its floating liquid natural gas processor off the coast of Queensland.

### Commendation for Queensland Branch News

by Martin Thomas published in *Workers Liberty*

NOT MANY UNION Branch newsletters typically carry articles studded with 22 reference footnotes, citing Karl Marx, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Terry Eagleton, and others, like the latest issue from the Queensland Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia, which organises dockworkers and seafarers.

Articles like that one, on Work and Technology by Jeff Rickertt, are not unusual in the Queensland MUA Branch News, where they appear alongside a range of shorter articles about events, disputes, negotiations.

On 27 April 2017, the MUA Branch News won the Queensland Council of Unions' May Day award for "best union newsletter".

Announcing the award, Branch Secretary Bob Carnegie, a Workers' Liberty supporter, thanks contributors for their explanations of "Marxist working-class positions", and adds:

"The branch would like to thank our admin staff who assemble the articles - Carol, Maria, and especially Kerri [Bird], who deciphers some of my handwriting, is always on the lookout for items of interest, and takes a very real personal and professional interest in the branch news". Enough of union newsletters which "talk down" to the members!

### McCluskey Article Foreword by Bob Carnegie

THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH of the MUA congratulates Len McCluskey on his recent victory in the Unite elections in Great Britain. However, we publish this thoughtful and critical article on his success. This article highlights the fact that so many members of unions have simply 'turned off'. This is highlighted that McCluskey, in a desperate fight against a right wing opponent, won with only 6.5% of the union's membership voting for him and his policies.

Australian unions are facing this same 'turning off' by members. This needs to be urgently addressed or otherwise unions will continue to sink into the general swamp of obscurity.

### Mccluskey Only Just Re-Elected

By Ann Field from *Workers Liberty*

GERARD COYNE — the candidate of the right, backed not just by the right-wing media but also by the most right-wing elements of the Labour Party — came within 5,500 votes of being elected the new General Secretary of Unite the Union.

McCluskey got 59,000 votes (45.5%); Coyne 53,500 (41.5%); and rank-and-file candidate Ian Allinson 17,000 (13%). McCluskey was re-elected, but in every other respect the election result was a major setback for McCluskey and the trade union politics which he represents.

The turnout was pitifully low: just 12.2%, even lower than in the 2013 general secretary election (15.2%) and the 2010 election (15.8%). The number of ballot papers issued (just over a million) also exposed the fall in Unite

membership: in 2010 1.5 million ballot papers were issued. Unite's official statement on the election result blames the low turnout on “the archaic and expensive balloting system imposed on trade unions by law.”

The statement is an evasion of reality. The key reasons for the low turnout are trade-union-



political, not the method of voting. McCluskey was backed by every Unite Regional Secretary (apart from Coyne), most members of the Unite National Executive Council, and the Unite United Left. He was nominated by 1,185 branches representing 560,000 members. But the upshot of all this was just 59,000 votes.

With McCluskey backing Corbyn, and Coyne spewing out hostility to Corbyn, the election functioned as a proxy Labour Party leadership contest. But despite what was at stake, and despite the resources he was able to pour into his campaign, McCluskey only just scraped home. No-one could have foreseen the general election, but the impact of a Coyne victory in such a context does not bear thinking about.

When McCluskey first stood for election in 2010, he stressed that he would be a one-term-only general secretary. But this year he stood for election for a third time, in an unnecessary contest deliberately triggered by his own resignation. Clearly, many members were alienated by McCluskey's cynical manipulation of the Rulebook, motivated solely by his desire to prolong his term of office. McCluskey was lucky that a lot of them abstained rather than voted for Coyne.

Hard-right Coyne deliberately ran a provocative hard-right campaign. His strategy was to mobilise Unite members who normally do not vote in elections. Fortunately, it did not work. But it very easily could have.

Given that he ran his campaign on a shoestring and was up against McCluskey's bureaucratic machine, 17,000 votes can count as a respectable vote for Ian Allinson. But the collapse in his vote compared with that of the "left" candidate Jerry Hicks in 2013 (80,000) and 2010 (52,000) confirms that Hicks's bedrock electoral support consisted to a large degree of right-wing opponents of McCluskey and ex-Amicus loyalists.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, Coyne is considering mounting a legal challenge to the election result, based on the number of Unite members reported not to have received ballot papers, or to have received them only when it was too late to vote. Coyne himself was also suspended from his job with Unite almost as soon as balloting had closed.

Reports of the reasons given for the suspension range from breaches of the Data Protection Act to circulating defamatory material during the election campaign. Whatever the precise details, the suspension certainly smacks of McCluskey's bureaucratic machine targeting a (very right-wing) dissident.

The dominant left culture within Unite has an excessive focus on elections. There is nothing wrong with wanting to win elections. The problem arises when political life degenerates into electioneering at the expense of rebuilding grassroots organisation at branch and workplace level. The general secretary election result is a manifestation of the failure of that approach: a fall in union membership; a fall in turnout; and a fall in the vote

for McCluskey. The key question now is how to bring about a transformation of that left culture and, thereby, of Unite itself.

## **Musician Phil Monsour / Set To Release Album Of New Union And Solidarity Songs**

### **Bob Carnegie Guest Speaker**

MUSICIAN AND UNION activist Phil Monsour will be launching a new album of union and solidarity songs on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May at Kurilpa Hall in WEST END Brisbane at 7pm.

All union members receive a free CD on the night and all proceeds will be donated to Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA.

The One Song One Union album features a song dedicated to each participating union, the Maritime Union of Australia, the Electrical Trades Union, the Queensland Teachers' Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, the Queensland Nurses' Union, United Voice and the Queensland Council of Unions.

**New 12 song album of union and solidarity songs written for the MUA QTU ETU QCU AMWU QNMU and United Voice.**

**One Song  
One Union**

**CD Launch and  
Benefit Concert**

**Phil Monsour Band  
& special guests**

**Free CD  
to Union  
Members**



**Saturday 27 May 7.00pm**

**Kurilpa Hall 174 Boundary St West End.**

**\$20/\$15 concession**

**Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/278065>**

**Cheap drinks available on the night. [www.philmonsour.com](http://www.philmonsour.com)**

**All proceeds to Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA**

For a year, Phil met with unionists, listening to their inspiring work and writing songs to capture their defiant spirit. The themes often overlapped: the fight for safe and fair conditions, decent wages, secure jobs and respect.

Recorded with an 8-piece band the music is bursting with energy, anger and hope.

The One Song One Union album came to life on two picket lines. The first, at the Brisbane waterfront where the shipping giant Hutchison fired half its workforce by text message in the middle of the night. The song \*One More Day than Them\* is inspired by the Maritime Union's fight to reinstatement the workers. After 100 days of picketing the workers defiantly walked back through the gates!

The second picket line was at a children's hospital - brave medical workers refused to discharge an injured refugee child back into one of Australia's infamous offshore immigration detention prisons. On the round-the-clock picket, Phil sang Solidarity Forever, with the hundreds of workers across several unions who supported the action. \*Let Them Stay\* was written at this time. In a small victory, baby Asha and her family were allowed to remain in Australia, all be it, in community detention.

*For further information, contact Phil Monsour 0400912550*

*Event Information: Launch Party and Benefit May 27<sup>th</sup> Kurilpa Hall West End 7pm*

*Bookings:*

<https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=278065>

*Event:*

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1421780904526947/>

## GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING



Calling all Drivers and Riders

It doesn't matter if you hit the streets on a scooter or thunder past on a Harley Davidson, cruise around in a big black Chevy or race around in a Datsun 180B with a sunroof.

You are all invited to join in for the first ever MUA Queensland Branch car and motorcycle rally.

So get your motorcycle, car, scooter, trike or whatever it is you drive or ride out of the shed and get ready for a good day.

We'll all be meeting in the car park of the union rooms at 10am on Saturday 20th May, 73 Southgate Ave, Cannon Hill.



We'll all cruise down to the Redland Bay Hotel for some lunch and a laugh.

All members are welcome to come along.

Call Paul Petersen  
0404 453 869  
for any further  
information.



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