



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. 94 – Thursday 13 July 2017

Get Wise, Organise – Turnbull's War on Social Security - Offshore Development - Meet Vicki Morta AMSA Medicals – Book Corner

Get Wise – Organise

Queensland Branch Conference 15-16 November 2017

WORK IS UNDERWAY in preparation for our second Branch Conference to be held at the Queensland Council of Unions Building, 16 Peel Street, South Brisbane on the above dates.



The Conference title is, Get Wise – Organise with the subtext being, ‘what is the future of organised labour in the age of automation and disruptive capitalism?’ **NO** issue is of greater relevance to our membership than this.

The Branch will have leaders of maritime workers, the general labour movement and academics from around the world to discuss and to brief members on this and other issues.

Members will have the opportunity to listen and to discuss with Jordi Aragunde on the great, recent victory of the Spanish dockers and the role of the IDC.

French dockers will speak of their experiences in both the dock and seagoing areas.

Our fellow workers from the United States will speak about Trump and the anti-union attacks they are under.

African and Asian comrades will talk about their heroic battles to simply have a union represent them.

And of course, comrades, speakers from all MUA Branches and the Australian union movement will be in attendance. However, in the end, it is YOUR Conference. The latter part of the 2nd day will be all

about how we can build a better and stronger Queensland Branch.

There will be two get togethers on the nights of the 15th and 16th. The 15th will be our Conference dinner and on the 16th will be end of Conference drinks.

Much more will be coming out about this important working class event in the coming weeks. Please stay tuned and make sure you try to attend this important working class event.

First Indigenous CIR on Gladstone/Weipa Run

MEET COMRADE VICKI Morta the first indigenous CIR on the Gladstone to Weipa run.

Vicki is from the Ngadjou’jii tribe in North Queensland. The Branch asked both Vicki and her mentor, Spike Grey a few questions. Alan (Spike) Grey, who anyone who has worked in the Blue water would know, had this to say about Vicki when asked what it is like to work with her:

Vicki is an absolute pleasure to sail with, the whole ship’s atmosphere changes when she’s up the gangway and her comrades have the utmost respect for her.

Vicki takes pride in every task she does and is highly respected by everyone, so much so even pilots who board the RTM Weipa ensure they go out of their way to say hello to Vicki.

Spike goes on to say she is a prime example of what a seafarer should do. She’s had a tough upbringing and is a very family orientated person with A grade values.

Another example of this is when she paid her own way down to Brisbane to attend the May Day march which led to the Queensland Branch asking that she join the campaign to increase the Australian seafaring content on the Gladstone to Weipa run.

Vicki had this to say when asked a few questions about this momentous event:

Why do you love going to sea?

I love going to sea because it is an adventurous career and I meet lots of great people; especially my comrades who teach me about the importance of unionism. I enjoy learning something new every day.

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

73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170

What's the name of your mob?

I am Aboriginal / South Sea Islander. My Tribe is Ngadjon-jii (Atherton Tableland region) Far North Queensland. I was born and raised in Atherton and did all my schooling in Innisfail.



What advice do you have for other women working in bloke dominated industries?

GO FOR IT! Because in 'bloke' dominated industries, us girls get challenged to push ourselves and become better people; not just better workers. I believe that women also challenge men to become better people and workers.

Who are your main mentors on the ships and in life?

At sea CIR's like Tony Carter, Donny Hopkins, Andrew Gray, John Higgins and especially Robert Coolwell, who has inspired me as an indigenous comrade, that has gone before me to become bosun and represent good seamanship.



Since 2003, I've been inspired by Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, who is an Australian film actress, Aboriginal activist, politician and 2015 NAIDOC Person of the Year. I met

Rosalie when I graduated at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (NT) in Cert 3 in Land Management. At that time, she was the Chairperson. She told me that I could do anything and as an Indigenous Woman.

The Queensland Branch is proud to have Vicki onboard. Amongst the darkest times the industry faces as we try to ensure there are even ships in the next decade to sail on, stories like this are a beacon of hope and determination to fight even harder to save the Blue Water which is almost decimated. We have to ensure comrades like Vicki get the opportunity to fulfil their absolute right to work on ships that ply the Australian coast.

Well done sister! *In Unity - Jason Miners Deputy Branch Secretary*

Eight Ways Turnbull Has Declared War on Social Security by Owen Bennett

Sourced from: <http://thenewdaily.com.au/money/welfare/2017/07/07/turnbull-war-social-security/>

As workers, we all feel anxious about what would happen to us and our families if we lost our jobs. Many MUA members face this real prospect. Owen Bennet, president of the Unemployed Workers Union explains how Turnbull's war on social security makes it even harder for workers to survive when jobs are lost and pay is low. Bob Carnegie

IN ITS 2017-18 BUDGET, the Turnbull government announced plans to cut millions of Australians off social security payments.

Under the pretext of tackling 'welfare dependency', the government is transforming Centrelink into a compliance institution tasked with harassing, humiliating and financially penalising social security recipients.

No one was spared – single parents, unemployed, disabled people, migrants, the aged and families were all targeted.

Mr Turnbull's goal is simple: make collecting a social security payment so humiliating and impoverishing (the dole is **\$380 per fortnight below the poverty line**) that recipients can be easily bullied into working at dodgy workplaces for below minimum wage – see the government's \$4-an-hour **PaTH program**.

This government effectively wants to turn social security recipients into cannon fodder in their war on workers. The government estimates that as part of this aggressive approach it will take **\$3.4 billion** out of the pockets of social security recipients over the next 5 years. Here's how:

Mandatory drug testing (Scheduled for 1 January 2018, cost undisclosed)

The government wants to drug-test 5000 unemployed Australians for marijuana, ecstasy and methamphetamines as part of a two-year trial.

People who refuse to take the drug test will be fined and those who test positive will be forced onto the cashless welfare card. A second positive test will result in a referral to a "contracted medical professional".

Given that a [2014 government report](#) stated that between 200,000 and 500,000 Australians are being denied access to drug treatment due to lack of resources – a problem ignored in the budget – it is unclear how this approach will help social security recipients with drug-related illnesses.

Tougher demerit point system

(Due 1 July 2018, \$632 million budget cut)

Under the new demerit point system, unemployed Australians who miss mandatory appointments or activities with their job agency will face harsher punishments.

A reduction of four demerit points over a six month period will result in unemployed people being pushed into a three-strikes compliance system in which the strikes are:

- One strike: Fine half of fortnightly payment (\$250)
- Two strike Fined entire fortnightly payment
- Strike Three: Payments cancelled altogether for at least 4 weeks

To meet the \$632 million ‘saving’ target, the government would need to impose a staggering 2.5 million \$250 fines.

The demerit point system will worsen the culture of fear and intimidation pervading Turnbull’s \$10 billion employment services industry.

Last year alone, private job agencies imposed two million penalties on unemployed workers – a ten-fold increase since 2011.

Of these penalties, Centrelink overturned roughly [four out of 10 penalties](#) upon review. Job agencies need to be investigated and better regulated, not given more powers. To go along with this tough new compliance system, the government will [increase the mutual obligations](#) of 270,000 people aged between 30 and 49 by 20 hours a fortnight – obligations that are already some of the most onerous in the world, according to the [OECD](#).

Denying support to people with drug related illness (Currently before Parliament, \$21.7 million budget cut)

Disability Support Pensioners who suffer from a drug related illness will [be ineligible for the payment](#) under the government’s plan.

The government estimates that with this change will result in at least 450 DSP applications being knocked back each year, further reducing the current [15 per cent success rate for applicants](#) (a rate which has halved since 2014 as a result of previous crackdowns).

Similarly, from 1 January 2018, unemployed Australians suffering from a drug related illness will not be eligible for an exemption from their onerous mutual obligation requirements, affecting 11,000 each year (at a cost of [\\$28.8 million](#)).

Expansion of the cashless welfare system

(Due 1 September 2017, cost \$145 million)

Despite the [extensive evidence](#) showing that cashless welfare does not help people suffering from drug-related illness, the ‘Healthy Welfare Card’ will be expanded beyond its current trial sites in Ceduna and East Kimberly to two new locations over the next two years.

Proposed by mining billionaire Andrew Forrest and set to be administered by the [INDUE company](#), the ‘Healthy Welfare Card’ quarantines 80 per cent of the social security recipient’s entitlement to a card that can only be spent at government-approved locations.

The government also plans to extend the income management sites (in which 50 per cent of income is quarantined) for a further two years.

Department of Human Service staff cuts (\$277 million budget cut)

The government has announced it will [cut 1188 staff](#) from the Department of Human Services (Centrelink), and open a commercial process for private companies to take over its call centre operations.

According to the Community and Public Sector Union, Mr Turnbull’s decision to outsource call centre operations means that calls will be handled by inadequately trained staff, and that a private company will have access to private records.

Over the past five years, the government has cut [5000 DHS staff](#) crippling the quality of service. As a result, 42 million calls to Centrelink received the [engaged signal](#) in the first 10 months of the 2016/17 financial year.

An estimated 220,000 people received aggressive robo-debt letters, 20 per cent of whom were found to be incorrect by a [recent Senate inquiry](#).

By cutting more staff, the government are saying that this poor quality of service is not just acceptable – it’s desirable.

Stricter eligibility for payments

(Due 1 July 2017, \$335 million budget cut)

Social security applicants will receive payment only from the date they lodge a complete claim.

Currently, Centrelink backdates social security payments from the date applicants lodged an [incomplete claim](#).

Additionally, from 20 September 2018, the waiting period for applicants with more than \$18,000 (singles) or \$36,000 (couples and/or singles with dependents) in liquid assets will double to [26 weeks](#).

And finally, from 1 July 2018, there will be stricter access to the DSP and Aged pension for people with less than 10 years Australian Working Life Residence.

Investigating Single Parent Pensioners

(Due 1 January 2018, \$93.7 million budget cut)

To be eligible for the Single Parent Pension, new applicants and current recipients will need a third party to substantiate their claims that they are single. Witnesses caught making a false declaration [face up to a year in jail](#).

Attacking Family Benefits

(Due 1 July 2017, \$2.4 billion budget cut)

Payment rates for Family Tax Benefits Part A and B will be [frozen for two years](#). Additionally, the reduction rate

for Family Tax Benefit Part A for families with income over \$94,316 will increase to 30 cents in the dollar.

Owen Bennett is president of the [Australian Unemployed Workers Union](#), an organisation dedicated to fighting for the rights and dignity of the unemployed.

Possible New Offshore Development

ConocoPhillips Australia

Barossa Area Development Offshore Project Proposal (OPP)

Open for public comment from Thursday, July 13 to Wednesday, September 6, 2017

ConocoPhillips Australia Exploration Pty Ltd (ConocoPhillips) and its co-venturers, SK E&S Australia Pty Ltd and Santos Offshore Pty Ltd is proposing to develop discovered hydrocarbon resources located in Commonwealth waters, approximately 300 kilometres north of Darwin, Northern Territory.

Barossa is an offshore gas and light condensate project that proposes to provide a new source of gas to the existing Darwin LNG facility, subject to suitable commercial arrangements being put in place. It will help meet future global demand for natural gas and contribute significant income and employment opportunities for Australia.

The Barossa offshore development area encompasses Petroleum Retention Lease NT/RL5 and NT/RL6. ConocoPhillips is the Operator of both leases.

The development concept includes a Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) facility, subsea production system and a gas export pipeline, all located in Commonwealth waters.

ConocoPhillips is pleased to advise that the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) has published the Barossa Area Development Offshore Project Proposal (Barossa OPP) for public comment.

The Barossa OPP has been prepared by ConocoPhillips, in accordance with the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009 administered by NOPSEMA under the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006.

An OPP is prepared during a project's early design phase and considers all potential environmental impacts and risks over the project's life-cycle. It provides an assessment of the acceptability of the project at this early stage and will deliver environmental outcomes equivalent to the assessment process under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

The OPP process, regulated by NOPSEMA, includes opportunity for interested members of the public to comment on the project during its early development stage.

Acceptance of an OPP by NOPSEMA does not mean a project can proceed. Acceptance provides approval for the subsequent submission of separate Environment Plans (EPs) for project activities to NOPSEMA for assessment and acceptance.

The OPP and all supporting appendices are now available for public comment on the NOPSEMA website at nopsema.gov.au/consultation/OPP/3696. Further information on ConocoPhillips and the Barossa Project is available at www.conocophillips.com.au

The public are now invited to make written submissions from Thursday, July 13 to Wednesday, September 6, 2017.

Comments should be provided in writing at nopsema.gov.au/consultation/OPP/3696, via email at submissions@nopsema.gov.au, or posted to the following addresses:

Courier to:	Submissions NOPSEMA Level 8 58 Mounts Bay Road PERTH 6000 Western Australia	Post to:	Submissions NOPSEMA GPO Box 2568 PERTH 6001 Western Australia
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THIS NOTICE WAS in the *Australian* on Thursday 17 July 2017. It is not to get members expectations up but I thought it may be of interest.

I have forwarded the notice on to both Comrades Christy Cain and Will Tracey who are, no doubt, aware of it. The sooner we are in talking to these huge outfits the better.

AMSA Medicals - Another Employment Obstacle

DESPERATE AND LOSING faith in ability in being re-employed again, seafarers on the EAS face many financial stress issues. Among them, after many years of continuous work, is the loss of your home or inability to pay even the mortgage when its due, among the many other living and family expenses.

There is the problem of the requirement to re-validate existing certification which when employed is usually paid for by the employer, as are passports, MSIC Cards and AMSA medicals. Living on no assistance, all these costs are now additionally born by the unemployed

seafarer, with very little hope in a future in the industry, and if there was, further limits are now imposed by the expanded aspects of the AMSA medical regime. Previously the AMSA medical under Marine Orders 9 of 2010, were pretty straight forward with the usual applicable tests.

After five years on the EAS alone and in the last 18 months I have paid for, and completed 4 AMSA medicals. All I have passed but after completing, companies have classed me as "high risk," therefore denying me work. This is where further fear rears its ugly head. As Bob Carnegie has said on several occasions, "it appears you have to be Usain Bolt to pass an AMSA medical."

What it highlights is the newly imposed restrictive physical requirements. They appear to be add-ons into the previous AMSA procedures. These 'add-ons' no doubt relieves the companies from additional expense associated with insisting upon company medicals as well. It also poses the danger that they can be used to further 'cull' our mature members from work opportunities, bypassing the blame for of their refusal to employ you on the results of failing an AMSA medical. When did these extra burdens slip in? They weren't there last year.

I have outlined the rudimentary issues concerning EAS seafarers above but what is not outlined is the dire consequences for some of our Comrades. Undue stress on their marriages and family lives because of the costs associated with these issues has seen many members resign or hang their heads up, despite many promises of upcoming work dangled in front of them. Even worse is the statistic of self harm as a result of this loss and unprecedented despair around all these issues.

At the recent WA Branch Conference, at the last two Branch monthly meetings and at our Branch Committee meeting, I have moved motions "That AMSA, other than Flag State demands, be the only requirement for passing medical fitness" and that "further our organisation should demand an answer from AMSA about these recent impositions applied to their process." By Mike Barber - Qld Branch Member

Book Corner

Little Dorrit
Charles Dickens



Review of *Little Dorrit*, 1857 by Charles Dickens

The screen versions of Dickens' stories are misleading. You have to read his actual words -- the bitter invective and satire in his novels -- to know how much he hated the injustices of England during the industrial revolution.

Yet Dickens was blind to the rise of the trade union movement, the historic force that would do most to protect ordinary people from this heartless society.

Instead, he supported middle-class moves to reform institutions and laws, especially the Poor Laws. In *Little Dorrit*, he exposes the inhumanity of jailing the poor. His saintly character, Amy Dorrit, is born in Marshalsea

debtor's prison, the same place that, in real life, Dickens' own father had been thrown.

Dickens discovered that the English state was in no hurry to reform its laws and institutions. In this novel, he satirises bureaucratic inertia in the form of "The Circumlocution Office" a department specialising in "How Not To Do" anything.

A similar criticism of bureaucracy can be found in the TV series, "Yes, Minister". But I think the capitalist state is well able to act when it suits the wealthy, as when it set up the ABCC to harass unionists. Only progressive reforms, like disability schemes and pollution control, seem to run aground.

Dickens' novels work well in a reading group, partly because they were meant to be read out loud. Dickens performed dramatic readings of them on his popular speaking tours. *Reviewed by Allan Gardiner*

Queensland Branch Hoodies



We now have two new zip up hoodies available for sale at the union rooms for \$60 (plus postage if required).

Please feel free to come into the Branch or contact the administration staff to order your hoodie before they sell out. 07 3395 7215



Models – Damien and Maria



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