



# 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. 125 - 6 April 2018

## We Need Unions - 25% Seafarers Show Signs of Depression - Sporting Shame - Vale Bob McCotter Cartoon Corner

### Now More Than Ever, We Need Unions

By Paul Syvret

*Paul Syvret is a good friend of mine and the Branch and has been for many years. Paul is a columnist for the Courier Mail and we are glad he can join us for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Patrick's Lockout. Bob Carnegie*

A STORM, ONE that would eventually engulf the nation, was brewing.

The Howard government was in power, and the previous year (1997) had passed its contentious Workplace Relations Act.

Patrick Stevedoring, one of the two big companies that handled most of the container freight going through Australian ports, was spoiling for a fight with Australia's powerful waterfront union, the Maritime Union of Australia.

Emboldened by explicit support from the government it set out to break the union, and staff its wharves with contract labour.

Former and serving military personnel began training as wharfies in Dubai so they could be used as strikebreakers (an operation abandoned after threats of international industrial retaliation).

In January of 1998, Patrick subleased a large section of its Webb Dock facility in Melbourne to a company bankrolled by the National Farmers Federation, and locked out its unionised workforce.

By April, temperatures were near boiling point with Patrick refusing to sign new enterprise agreements, and the MUA seeking orders in the Federal Court which would prevent the company from sacking its workforce.

A day after the court told Patrick to abide by existing agreements, Patrick sent in the goons. In the dead of night, buses and boatloads of guards, some in balaclavas, accompanied by rottweilers and equipped with barbed wire, moved into Patrick facilities around the country, turfed out the workers and chained the gates shut.

That was 20 years ago this weekend, and it marked the beginning of the most bitter industrial clash the country had seen in many years.

Maritime workers and their families showed their anger at Webb Dock every day while the lockout was on.



(Pic: Paul Syvret)

Not since the jailing of union firebrand Clarrie O'Shea in Victoria in 1969 — an event that sparked the largest national strike of the post-war era — had the forces of capital aligned so closely with a government in an attempt to so emasculate a labour force.

That night about 1400 full-time wharfies and hundreds more casuals were summarily dismissed. As one MUA delegate recalls: "We were loading a ship, two gangs of workers, when security guards jumped on the moving cranes and grabbed the keys out of the ignition. The place was crawling with them, about 100 men and dogs."

What followed was a month of chaos on the Australian waterfront as thousands of unionists and supporters formed picket lines at Patrick facilities around the country.

Such was the government complicity that federal legislation was proposed to place a special levy on cargo movements to finance the redundancy of workers and the MUA's removal from the waterfront.

Major Australian companies contributed about \$100 million to the NFF to assist in the fight, while the head of the Business Council of Australia vowed that corporate Australia would "wear any amount of costs" to break the MUA.

Meanwhile, in Perth, authorities tried to smash the blockade with riot police and batons. The line held.

At Webb Dock in Melbourne, police mobilised to break through a picket line that by April 16 had swelled to 4000

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

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people manning a barricade of shipping containers, car bodies, and welded steel.

Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) President John Coombs at Port Botany dock following mass sacking of wharves by Patrick Stevedores on 10 April in 1998.



(Pic: Paul Syvret)

As a police helicopter circled overhead, 2000 construction workers arrived to reinforce the picket and police retreated. The line held.

In Brisbane, the picket also swelled, and on April 21 more than 180 people were arrested trying to blockade the road and disrupt freight by chaining themselves across the railway's tracks.

This was a national stand-off Patrick was not going to win.

In early May, the High Court ordered the removal of Patrick's mercenaries from the docks and peace talks commence, with a new agreement finally settled in September.

The dispute still resonates today as a reminder not only of the ceaseless attacks on the rights of workers to mobilise, bargain as a collective and, if necessary, withdraw their labour but also of the power that comes from solidarity.

The waterfront of 20 years ago is a potent example of what a strong union, backed by a combination of community support and co-operation from other unions — even without resorting to secondary boycotts — can achieve.

It is the sort of determined solidarity we saw with the recent Carlton United Breweries dispute where after a six-month-long standoff, and community boycotts of popular brands such as VB and Carlton, 55 sacked brewery workers were reinstated with “fair and decent union terms and conditions.”

These are the sort of victories no employee could ever hope to achieve alone, and can only be fought and won by workers united in a common cause.

So this weekend raise a glass (VB is okay now) in honour of the men and women of the MUA, and remember ‘militant’ is not a dirty word.

And join your union.

@psyvret

## A Quarter of Seafarers Show Signs of Depression, Study Says

Sourced from: <https://worldmaritimeneews.com/archives/248445/a-quarter-of-seafarers-show-signs-of-depression-study-says/>

MORE THAN A quarter of seafarers show signs of depression, and many won't ask for help, according to a study of seafarers' mental health presented at Sailors' Society's Wellness at Sea conference on March 16, London.



Image Courtesy: Pixabay

The study of more than 1,000 seafarers was carried out by international maritime charity Sailors' Society and Yale University, with more than one in six of the respondents coming from the UK.

Some 26 percent of seafarers said they had felt “down, depressed or hopeless” on several days over the previous two weeks, the study findings show. Furthermore, the seafarers said the quality and amount of food on board can have a big impact on their mental health, alongside isolation from their families and length of their contracts.

Nearly half (45 percent) of the seafarers who reported symptoms of depression said they had not asked anybody for help. Around one-third said they had turned to family and/or friends, but only 21 percent said they had spoken to a colleague, despite spending months on a ship with them, the study finds.

### A ‘macho’ industry

Dan Thompson, 29, from London, who had to take time out from his job as a navigation officer when he became depressed, spoke at the conference to raise awareness of the problem. “The reason I became ill was primarily my job – the workload, the sleep deprivation and the pressures of the job.

“Having lived at sea I would anticipate the numbers of people suffering from depression to be even higher than those who admitted it in the survey.

“Our industry is generally more ‘macho’ than many others. The attitude is to just toughen up and get on with it. There is a fear of talking about it openly, of losing your job,” he said.

“Seafarers spend months on end at sea, facing some of the toughest conditions of any workforce – isolation, cramped living quarters, noise, heat, storms – sometimes they're not even able to stomach the food on board,” Sailors' Society Deputy CEO Sandra Welch said.

“This report is a wake-up call to the industry about the huge impact this is having on seafarers’ mental health.

“We’re working with shipping companies to help them offer the best care to their employees, who are the lifeblood of the industry and our global economy.”

Maritime charity Sailors’ Society, which celebrated its 200th anniversary this month, works with seafarers in 91 ports around the world, offering counselling and support to those struggling with depression.

## **COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR ALL MUA MEMBERS**

**Hunterlink** National Assistance services include:

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- Case management
- Individualised treatment
- Relapse prevention
- Engagement of family
- Transitional accommodation
- Group and peer support

**Helpline: 1800 554 654**

## **If You Think Ball-Tampering is Our National Sporting Shame, You Haven’t Met Matt Lodge**

*By Holly Wainwright – sourced from: <https://www.mamamia.com.au/why-are-we-outraged-about-ball-tampering/>*

The disgrace of a nation. Australia’s shame. A dark time for sport in this country. It’s been a rough week for our national obsession. We’ve seen three men hailed as heroes brought to their knees by their own stupidity and arrogance. It’s shocking, really.

Steve Smith, Dave Warner and Cameron Bancroft are flying back to their homeland today to pay the price of a dumb decision, a morally bankrupt call, a low act. We can’t remember the last time we all felt so let down by our sporting heroes.

It certainly wasn’t when Greg Bird – then a star player for the National Rugby League’s Cronulla Sharks – was found guilty of smashing a glass into his girlfriend’s face.

It wasn’t when Nick Stevens – a former vice-captain of Carlton AFL club – admitted to repeatedly beating his partner Laima McKenna, including threatening to kill her and kicking her while she lay cowering on the floor.

It wasn’t that time the Sydney’s Roosters’ Blake Ferguson was convicted of indecently assaulting a

woman in a nightclub or when South Sydney’s Kirisome Auva’a pleaded guilty to drunkenly assaulting his ex-girlfriend.

And it wasn’t when North Melbourne and Adelaide “legend” Wayne Carey broke a glass in his girlfriend’s face and was then convicted of kicking a responding policewoman in the mouth.

No, none of those incidents were a national disgrace.

As the new football season begins, the NRL boasts four players who have been charged with domestic violence.

And that number doesn’t even include Matthew Lodge, the Brisbane Broncos player who is expected to be a star for the Queensland team this season despite an ongoing dispute over \$1.6 million in damages he owes an American couple for beating and terrorising them – and their nine-year-old son – during a home invasion in 2015. Lodge was walking on a Manhattan street when he began to harass Carolin Deykeyser, a young German woman. It was 4am when he followed her and repeatedly told her “tonight’s the night you’re going to die”. Terrified, she began to madly press the doorbell of a random apartment.

The man who lived there – Joseph Cartwright – opened the door to save Deykeyser from this drunk, furious Australian footballer. Instead, Lodge barged into the apartment’s foyer and began to beat Cartwright, punching him repeatedly in the face. He then ran into the apartment, where Ruth Fowler, Cartwright’s partner, and their nine-year-old son were hiding from the ruckus in the bathroom. Lodge began to smash up all the apartment’s furniture, while a terrified Cartwright was locked outside, waiting for help.

By the time the police came, Lodge was trying to punch his way through the bathroom door to the little boy and his mum.

Now, Matthew Lodge is back in Australia, and has been cleared by the NRL to be one of the Bronco’s poster boys this year.

We let back blokes back into the game who touched



women and it women. I wouldn’t put him in that class with other blokes like that still playing, so let’s just move on,” captain of the Cronulla Sharks, Paul Gallen, told the

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media ahead of his team's opening game against Lodge's Broncos.

Oh. Well, then.

None of this behaviour is a national disgrace, of course. None of it brings sport into disrepute, or points to a toxic culture, or sees big-name stars stood down for significant periods, losing their status and income. None of these incidents dominate the news cycle for days and days at a time.

No. If a sportsman really wants to feel the wrath of Australia, it seems, he needs to damage a cricket ball.

### Vale Bob McCotter

MUA MEMBER, BOB McCotter recently passed away whilst overseas. Comrade Ross Kirkwood will be hosting memorial drinks on 20 April 2018 at 1.00pm at the Brighton Bowls Club, 147 Northcote Street, Brighton.

### Cartoon Corner



### Unity Bank News



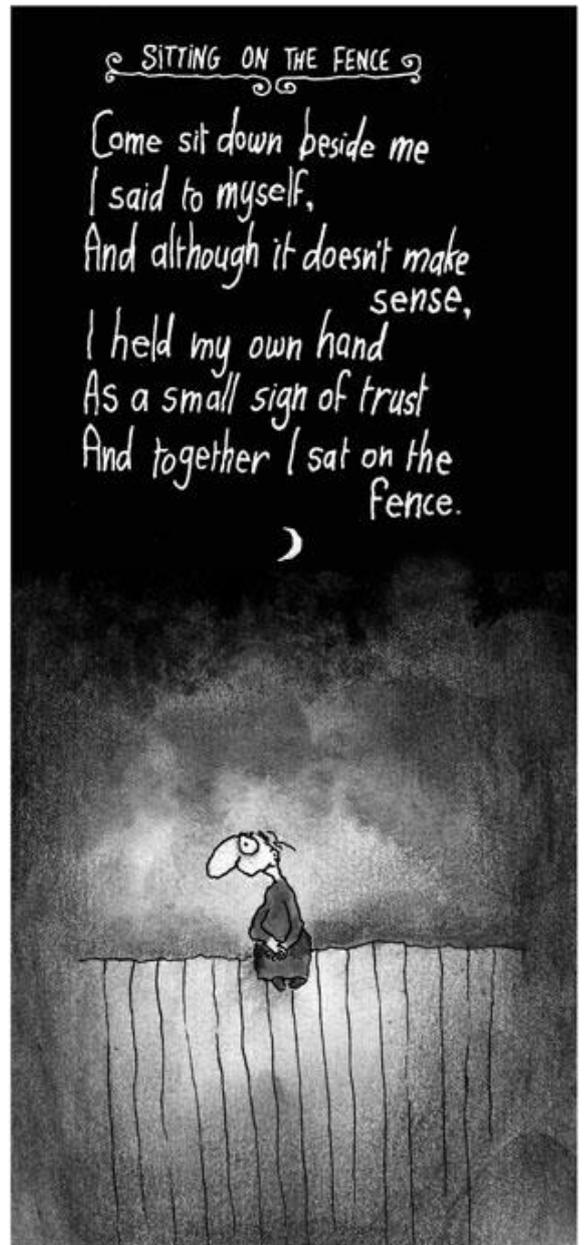
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