

# RTBU WA BRANCH

## Newsletter



Edition: July 2019



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Dear Members,

Over the last few months, I have been busy visiting as many worksites and towns as I can. This is something that I want to continue to do. It has been great to see some faces that I haven't seen for many years, and to meet some new ones as well. My plan for the rest of the year is to continue visiting as many of our members as I can. I intend on visiting Kalgoorlie in the next week or so. I look forward to seeing our members while I'm there. If you would like me to visit your worksite to speak to the workers, please contact me.

The RTBU WA Branch's financial reporting obligations for the 2018 financial year are now complete. For many years, our auditors have warned the Union that it needs to restructure its operations if it wants to continue as a going concern. When your new Executive Team was elected in September 2018, we immediately jumped on the auditor's concerns and started making some big changes at the office. As a result of those urgent changes, the WA Branch has saved tens of thousands of dollars and has started turning around its financial forecasts for the first time in almost a decade. I am hopeful that next year's financial reporting will be a lot more positive than it has been in the past. The Union's finances are largely linked to membership dues. It is very important that we work together to increase the size of the RTBU. The more members that we have, the stronger we become.

In Unity, Craig McKinley

## Rail Industry Updates

The WA Labor Government and the Federal Member for Fremantle, Josh Wilson, have secured around \$250 million to replace the Fremantle rail bridge. This should assist with getting more container freight out of the Fremantle Inner-Harbour via rail until such time as the new Outer Harbour in Kwinana is approved and built. The more container freight we can get on rail coming out of the Port, the less congestion we will see on our roads.

The RTBU is in discussions with the WA Government about ensuring that new lithium haulage work in the South-West is carted by rail rather than road. There are a number of community groups in the South-West that are starting to emerge surrounding this and similar issues. I encourage all RTBU members in the South West and their families to get involved in these groups. Lithium haulage between Greenbushes and Kwinana presents a huge opportunity for our members and the future of our industry. The RTBU WA Branch will continue to advocate and campaign around this issue.

There are rumours of new iron ore haulage starting up between Lake Giles and Esperance. The RTBU is committed to working with interested companies and the State Government to ensure that this project goes ahead.

## Long End Running

In 1982, the WA Coroner's Court conducted an inquest into the death of four gangers who were hit by a goods train near Merredin. The goods train was running long end.

The Coroner said "It is also apparent to me having had an opportunity of examining an L-class locomotive that when the long end is leading the train crew's vision of the track is seriously hampered. I would recommend that such locomotives be operated with the short end leading where it is at all possible...".

If it is possible to run your train short end, you should be doing so. Long end running is an unsafe practice in our industry that we need to avoid wherever possible.

## Hazard Alert

The sands that are used to fill locomotive sand bins often contain silica. This dust causes cancer. It is important that our members are not exposed to silica dust. Please contact your OSH Representative and the RTBU office if this is an issue in your workplace.

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Train derailment on the Toodyay to Miling freight line.  
Picture: Tony White/ Twitter

### Safety Reminder

There has been a large number of safety incidents this year in the WA rail industry. Some incidents were caused by matters out of our members' control (e.g. broken rails), but others have been because people have been cutting corners or acting carelessly. We work in a very dangerous environment. It is easy to forget or lose sight of just how dangerous the rail industry can be. I can't stress enough how important it is that everyone does their job properly and avoids unnecessary distractions. It only takes one mistake or lapse of concentration for someone to be seriously injured or killed.

### Political Update

The RTBU WA Branch is affiliated with UnionsWA and WA Labor. These affiliations are important. They allow the RTBU to advocate for more jobs, safer jobs, and better quality jobs for rail workers throughout Western Australia.

The WA Branch holds a position on the Executive Committee and on the State Conference of WA Labor. For the better part of a century the RTBU (and its historical entities) has sat in the left of Labor and has voted in a block with other like-minded unions such as the firefighters union, the manufacturing workers union, the electrical trades union, and United Voice. I am very proud to say that this practice will continue under the current Branch Executive.

The RTBU also negotiates from time-to-time with politicians from the Nationals and the Greens on issues affecting our members.

The RTBU has attended meetings with various State politicians this year to discuss the future of the rail freight industry. Those discussions have been positive. The WA Labor Government, under the leadership of Mark McGowan, has been easy and productive to work with. Premier Mark McGowan and Industrial Relations Minister Bill Johnston have been especially helpful in saving our members' jobs in the Esperance and Kalgoorlie region.

If you would like to know more about the political role that the Union plays, please call Craig McKinley.

### Bunbury/Collie Subbranch

The Bunbury/Collie subbranch recently held its first union meeting in many years. The RTBU's Organiser, George Johnston was present at the meeting. He was very impressed with the enthusiasm and professionalism displayed at the meeting. Well done to all members who took part.

### Industrial Updates

The RTBU office has assisted around 10 members who have been involved in incidents so far this year. We have managed to secure favourable outcomes for each of those members. If you do get in trouble at work, make sure you keep your workplace RTBU delegate up to date. If you feel you are being treated harshly by the boss, do not hesitate to contact the RTBU office for some advice.

Medical assessments commonly cause issues for RTBU members. Rail doctors need to comply with a strict assessment Standard. A copy of the standard to which your health is assessed can be found here: <https://www.ntc.gov.au/rail/safety/national-standard-for-health-assessment-of-rail-safety-workers/>

### Vale

The Union has recently lost Shaun Willis, Michael 'Mick' Gottsch, and Stuart Vine. May our fallen comrades rest in peace.