

ACTIVE STRONG UNITED

Bigger than the Olympics: World Youth Day Sydney

JUST LIKE 8 YEARS AGO, SYDNEY WILL BE THE CENTRE STAGE OF THE WORLD. UNFORTUNATELY, UNLIKE 8 YEARS AGO, THE CITY AND IN FACT THE WHOLE STATE IS CRUMBLING.

225,000 tourists are expected to arrive in Sydney for the World Youth Week festivities, the majority of whom will be relying on CityRail to transport them to and from events.

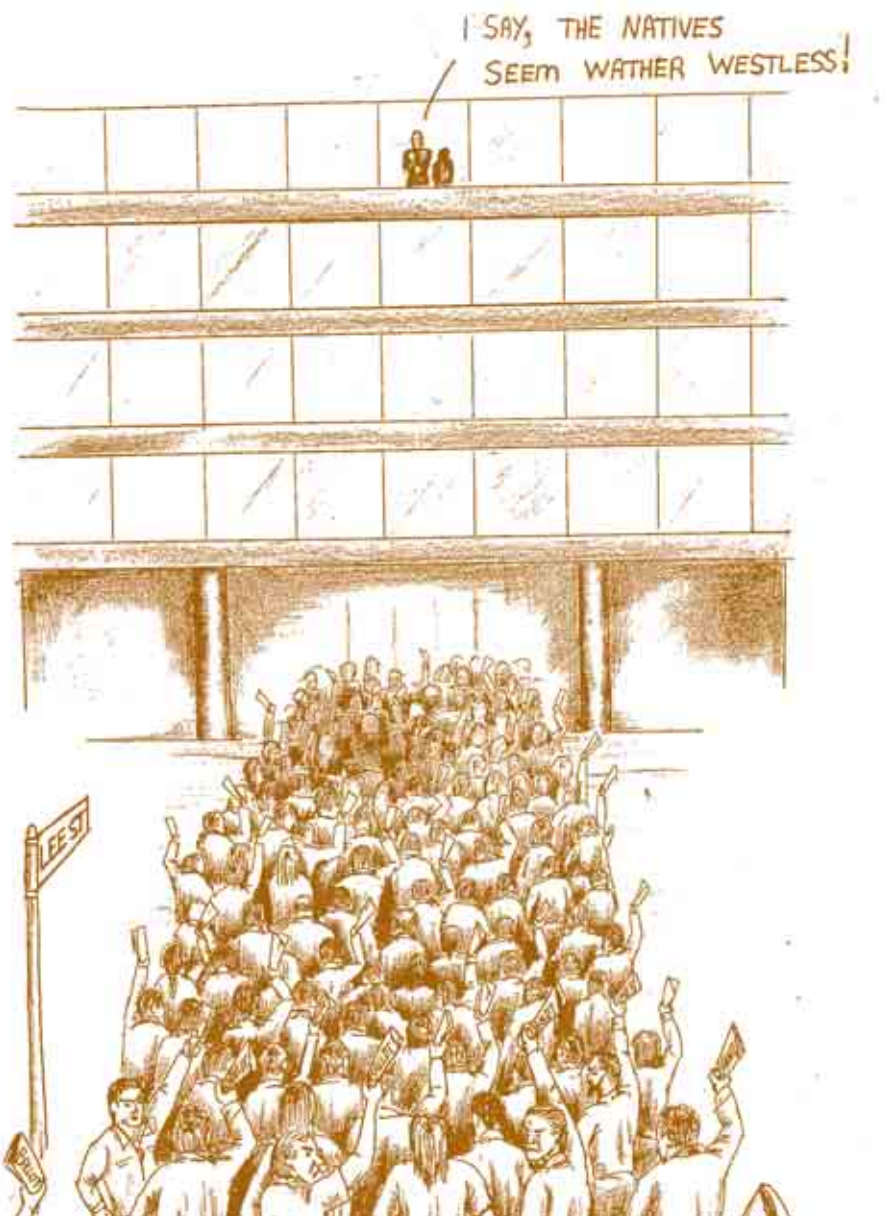
This is the same CityRail system that has been neglected by the Government over the past decade. This is the same CityRail system that has reduced staffing levels at stations. This is the same CityRail system that is so overcrowded that people are virtually hanging out the doors.

So low are staffing levels at Stations that RailCorp management has had to force some office staff to 'volunteer' to be guides during the event.

Now RailCorp expect workers' goodwill to help deliver this major event. Well, let's be frank. Goodwill will not pay the mortgage. Goodwill will not pay food bills. Goodwill will not put petrol in the tank.

As a thank you for all this hard work, RailCorp have offered its workers a 1.5% pay cut. Their reasoning is that 'they have to follow the Government's policy'.

This current NSW Government with a Bumbling Dilemma of a Premier and Dr Evil Treasurer are so far 'Right' leaning that they could, to the untrained eye, be mistaken for members of the Liberal Party. You've got a Mr Nice Guy Transport Minister who nods and smiles when you meet him and then does absolutely nothing to solve any problems.



This is a Government that would rather negotiate with the Liberals than their own members over power privatisation.

This is a government that expects its

workers to pull a miracle out of the hat for the pope!

World Youth Day might be a disaster waiting to happen for RailCorp users.

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FROM THE SECRETARY



Your Rights at Work – still at risk

IT IS BECOMING CLEARER THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON THE NEW IR LAWS ARE NOT PROCEEDING AS ASU MEMBERS EXPECTED. IT LOOKS LIKE WE ALL HAVE NO CHOICE OTHER THAN TO RESTART

THE “YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK” CAMPAIGN WHICH BROUGHT DOWN THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT.

ASU members fought hard for five key things during the WorkChoices campaign. They were:

1. Abolition of AWA's
2. Restoration of unfair dismissal rights
3. Protection of our awards
4. Restoration of the role of the independent umpire, and
5. Restoration of collective bargaining rights

While we have won on AWAs, the future of many of the other things we campaigned for is currently in doubt.

There are two that are immediately most concerning:

1. AWARDS

The Labor Government is currently undergoing a process of “modernising” awards. This involves radically reducing the number of awards. We do not understand how this action can occur without reducing rights for workers. For example, there are currently many awards for each of our industries that have different conditions – if they are abolished, what will they be replaced with? For ASU members who depend on their award, this is a huge concern.

2. THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT UMPIRE

It is not yet clear whether the Industrial Commission will be given any powers to resolve disputes. It will be able to “conciliate” but the Government is so far refusing to confirm whether it can also arbitrate. This is a right that workers have had for over 100 years in Australia. We believe that no boss will take conciliation seriously if they know the Commission has no power to make a decision at the end of the day.

Employers and big business have been working overtime since the Federal election pressuring the Labor Government to keep many aspects of WorkChoices in place or to re-badge them under another name.

Should this continue, we will have no choice other than to restart the “Your Rights at Work” campaign to assure the Federal Government that the people voted clearly to get rid of WorkChoices and this is exactly what we expect them to do.

2008/9 UNION FEES FROZEN FOR DIRECT DEBIT & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS

The ASU executive has determined that it can keep fees at their current levels in 2008/9 for those members who pay by direct debit or credit card. Unfortunately, due to increased costs associated with issuing accounts for members, an increase of 50 cents a week will apply to cash/ cheque payments. In line with the union's stated aim to remove all members from payroll deductions, the 50 cent increase will also apply to these payments. This fee increase can be avoided by simply moving over to either direct debit or credit card payments. If you wish to make the switch, please complete the enclosed form and return by fax or post. The new fees will apply from 1st August.

WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?

ATTENTION PASSENGERS: RAILCORP EBA NEGOTIATIONS STILL CONTINUE AFTER 9 MONTHS.

MEMBERS OF THE COMBINED RAIL UNIONS (CRU) CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE HAVE FACED NOTHING BUT DELAYS SINCE BEGINNING DISCUSSIONS TOWARDS MAKING A NEW AGREEMENT IN AUGUST 2007, SEVEN MONTHS PRIOR TO THE AGREEMENT'S EXPIRY DATE.

Since August 2007 there have been approximately 40 meetings dealing with both the Agreement, and finalising the consolidated conditions of employment document and the situation is still uncertain.

Transnews spoke to 4 delegates, asking them why they thought RailCorp was taking so long to make any decisions.

Why do you think it's taking management so long to come to negotiate the EBA?



CATHERINE JEFFS:

Management tend to play games. They think if they spin it out long enough they'll wear unions down to the point where we'll agree to anything just to get something agreed to on the table. I think that's their tactic. They are pushing us to the point of accepting anything.



JOHN MAHER:

I believe there has been a deliberate strategy to string the negotiations out so that it will prevent us from either taking or threatening to take industrial action before World Youth Day. World Youth Day is in July. It will take 3 or 4 weeks for us to apply to the Industrial Relations Commission, and get the ballot underway. (We need to do all of that of course because

we are working under WorkChoices). I could be wrong; it might just simply be incompetence rather than strategy.



ZAK DJURDJEVIC:

I think they're being very crafty in the way they're wording the agreement so they are able to reduce workers' rights as much as possible without it seeming as though they are doing it. They claim they are a state owned corporation and

they are therefore looking after the bottom line of the company. But ultimately, workers cost money and they just want to reduce their bottom line and reduce worker related costs on the government.



ROBERT HUCKER:

I think it is because of poor management. Management want too much for too little in return and they aren't compromising.

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RAILCORP EBA UPDATE

MEMBERS ARE CURRENTLY IN THE THICK OF COMPLICATED EBA NEGOTIATIONS. Since the current RailCorp and RIC Agreement were certified in 2005, senior RailCorp management has used every legal trick in the book to undermine the 2005 Agreement and conditions. Unfortunately RailCorp's decisions have had the full backing of the NSW Premier, Morris Iemma and Treasurer, Michael Costa, so the fight for fair pay and conditions continues.

A Combined Rail Unions (CRU) Campaign Committee was established to oversee negotiations and to organise campaigning in support of the members' claims. The Campaign Committee priorities of this campaign are clear and fair. Here is a comparison of the opposing arguments:

THE BARGAINING POSITIONS OF CRU AND RAILCORP

CRU	RAILCORP
All existing Award and Agreement conditions be maintained – no trade offs in conditions, including indefinite Salary Maintenance	Maintenance of terms and conditions of employment dependent on accepting a wage cut (2.5% increase).
A wage/salary increase that maintains people's standard of living and rewards productivity	Anything above 2.5% must be 'paid for' by reductions in terms and conditions.
No Extra Claims by management during the life of the next agreement unless functional agreements are entered guaranteed	Restructuring by unilateral management prerogative and no negotiation on future reform proposals

Meetings of CRU members were held throughout May and unanimously voted in favour of the following :

1. We reject the latest RailCorp offer,
2. We endorse the combined rail unions continuing to seek to gain genuine agreement through collective agreement negotiations; and
3. We direct the combined rail unions to make an application in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission for a protected industrial action ballot; and
4. We support a political and industrial campaign in advancing our claims.



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TRANSITS PRESSURE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

ASU MEMBERS MET WITH JOHN WATKINS, THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, TO CLEARLY DEFINE THE ROLE OF TRANSIT OFFICERS. THE MEETING CAME IN RESPONSE TO RECENT INSTANCES OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT OF RAIL PASSENGERS WHICH HIGHLIGHTED THE UNREALISTIC RESTRAINTS PLACED ON TRANSITS TO MONITOR DANGEROUS SITUATIONS. IT ALSO RESPONDED TO INCREASED INVESTIGATIONS BY THE SECURITY DIVISION AND WORKPLACE CONDUCT UNIT WHICH UNDERMINE THE ROLE OF TRANSIT'S ACTIONS.

At the meeting two issues were raised:

- The need to better define the role of Transit Officers. At the moment there is confusion over whether the main role of Transits is a customer service and revenue protection role or whether it should be law enforcement. The combined feeling around the table, including from the Minister, was that Transits main role is law enforcement, and customer service and revenue

protection come after this role. When asked by the Minister if they would be happy if the role of Transits was to simply issue fines, the overwhelming response was they would not be happy and would probably leave. The delegation asked the Minister to look at the lack of power and resources which prevents Transits from fulfilling their law enforcement role on railways.

- The need to reduce the number of WCU and Security Division investigations and the length of time taken to undertake such investigations. Extensive investigations into Transits' use of force in incidents such as reported robberies and violence, have been conducted with the view that Transits are customer service and revenue protection officers as opposed to law enforcement officers. As such, the delegation requested RailCorp independently assess the role and duties of Transits. RailCorp has so far refused this request.

A letter has been sent to the Minister requesting another meeting to discuss any decisions made.

UPDATE ON RIC NEGOTIATIONS

The RIC agreement has been voted on and the outcome includes a 2.5% wage increase for a 12 month agreement, with no trade-offs. The Combined Rail Unions (CRU) moved to separate RIC from the multi-employer agreement in order to finalise an agreement prior to seconded employees exiting the industry. The CRU negotiating team successfully refused to give up salary maintenance for a pay rise as salary maintenance is a rail industry standard that must be protected for all rail workers.

TRANSNEWS SPEAKS WITH MICHELLE BATTIN



What is your job description?

I work in the administration area at Sydney Ferries Balmain ship yard at the engineering facility. I've been there for 2 years.

How long member of ASU?

I've been a union member for 6 years and a delegate for 12 months. I think the role of a delegate is important to be the voice of people who want assistance and don't want to get it alone. That's what we're here for, to help them out.

Being a woman in a male dominated job, the current debate about paid maternity leave must resonate with you. How would you like to see maternity leave conditions improve?

There are millions of women working now and with high

inflation rates and mortgages it's very difficult for many. We need to encourage women to enter the workforce and give them reason to return. It's vital that women get paid for maternity leave. I'd like to see 12 months. Such a reasonable amount of time seems optimistic. It would be nice.

Do you think the union still needs to continue campaigning with the new government? How do we do this?

Absolutely. We need to be on our toes all the time and let the government know that we're watching and we're going to keep at them. We need to continue to campaign, send letters, and meet with politicians.

Why is union membership important?

So that you know that you're protected and that you're going to have the support from your union.

FARE EVADERS

RAILCORP HAVE TEMPORARILY ALLOWED STATION STAFF TO OFFER PASSENGERS FACED WITH LONG QUEUES AND FAULTY TICKET MACHINES THE OPTION OF TRAVELLING WITHOUT A TICKET AND PAYING FOR THE TRIP AT THEIR DESTINATION.

This undermines the role of station staff and is a potential loss of millions of dollars in revenue as some passengers

may avoid paying the fare. RailCorp should focus on improving infrastructure problems caused through its own incompetence instead of focusing on cost savings by directly targeting staff through continual restructures, cutting the hours of station managers, and refusing to come to a reasonable position in EBA negotiations. Staff seem to be copping the effects of inefficient management.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK FACT SHEET 3 – DISCIPLINE MATTERS

When you face a disciplinary matter with your employer, it is important to remember that you do have some rights. You have a right to:

1. Know what the meeting is about and to have that put in writing to you prior to the meeting.
2. Representation – have someone with you – preferably your workplace delegate.
3. A reasonable time frame for the meeting that allows you to obtain representation and prepare a response to the written allegations against you.
4. A fair and proper process that conforms with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. (Having the concerns outlined in writing, being represented, and having adequate time to respond.)
5. Have a copy of the organisation's Disciplinary Policy.

The most important thing to remember with any disciplinary matter is to GET IT IN WRITING before you attend any meeting. If other matters are raised at the meeting, you should request that those matters be put to you in writing, which will allow you to prepare a response.

Members often face pressure from their employers to enter meetings without notice. Consequently they do not get the accusations against them put into writing. If they do, it is often with vague detail and there is disagreement with the outcome of the disciplinary process.

Often a member will be called into a meeting by words along the lines of "I just need to talk to you". If you find yourself in this situation – stop the boss and say – "I need you to put this matter into writing and arrange a meeting at an appropriate time when I can have someone with me". If your boss tries to argue – say to them "I am only trying to protect my rights". If the boss insists you should call the ASU for assistance.

Another common issue is disagreement over the outcome or contents of the warning. If this is the case, you should sign the warning with "signed in acknowledgement of receipt only". You should then immediately write a letter in response outlining why you don't agree with the contents or the outcome. This ensures your side of the story is on your personal file – which will be important if the action is repeated or it escalates to a dismissal.

APPEAL TO HELP VICTIMS OF BURMA



A cyclone survivor huddles behind a corrugated iron sheet trying to cook some rice

CYCLONE NARGIS

"Where are all those uniformed people who are always ready to beat civilians? They should come out in full force and help clean up the areas and restore electricity." — *Rangoon resident, 4 May 2008**

Cyclone Nargis, which hit southern towns of the Irrawaddy delta in Burma, the area which produces most of Burma's rice, left tens of thousands dead and missing.

WHAT IS THE BURMESE MILITARY JUNTA DOING?

"There is no aid. We haven't seen anyone from the government" said U Pinyatale, the abbot of the Kyi Bui Kha monastery, where almost-depleted rice stocks and precious rainwater are shared with some 100 homeless villagers huddled within its battered compound.

TIME FOR INTERVENTION?

The case for humanitarian intervention has been gaining momentum. Although not a UN resolution or a statute under international law, the "Responsibility to Protect," or "R2P," is a framework invoked in the case of "national authorities manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity."

In the meantime, relief is up to the Burmese people themselves and small Non Government Organisations such as Norwegian People's Aid, assisted by Union Aid Abroad who are managing relief 'under the radar' of the Generals.

To donate to the Burma Cyclone Appeal call 1800 888 674 or go to www.unionaidabroad.org.au. Don't forget donations are tax-deductible. Why not become a regular monthly donor (a Global Justice Partner)?

BURMA OR MYANMAR – WHAT'S IN A NAME?

On 18 June 1989, the Burmese military junta changed the English version of the country's name from Burma to Myanmar. This was done without a national referendum to have the Burmese electorate ratify the name change. Opposition groups continue to use the name "Burma", since they do not recognise the legitimacy of the ruling military government nor its authority to rename the country in English. Union Aid Abroad uses the name Burma out of respect for those struggling for rights and freedoms.

HOW IS UNION AID ABROAD-APHEDA GETTING AID TO THE PEOPLE OF BURMA?

We are working with small teams of aid workers who are making trips into the delta region to deliver aid. Our partner organisation, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is working with local community organisations to get aid out to the people, while avoiding tight government restrictions on development work and ensuring that funds are not misappropriated by the regime.

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

IN THE LATE 1980'S ALL UNIONS IN AUSTRALIA UNDERWENT AMALGAMATIONS. PRIOR TO THIS THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF SMALL UNIONS. SMALL UNIONS HAD LIMITED INFLUENCE BY THEMSELVES, OTHER THAN IN THEIR IMMEDIATE WORKPLACES. UNIONS SAW THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO COMBINE OUR RESOURCES AND NUMBERS TO BUILD MORE POWERFUL AND BETTER RESOURCED UNIONS FOR WORKING PEOPLE.

The ASU came about because of a vision. Many public sector unions were in membership decline because of outsourcing policies and economic rationalism. At the same time, new industries were growing with newer unions who had starting unionising. The vision of the ASU was to bring together strongly unionised public unions and community and private sector unions in the services industries to build a strong, well resourced union which had opportunities for growth into the future.

This was a union which would benefit all, which gave declining public sector unions a future where they could grow and increase their influence, and small community and private sector unions had a base and resources in

order to expand and unionise these new industries. This would make workers in all of these industries stronger.

Our union bought together:

- public sector unions - The Sydney Water Corporation Unions, the Hunter Water Corporation Union, the Transport Officer Union ("white collar" workers in the transport industry), the Maritime Industry Union ("white collar" workers)
- the community sector union – workers in the non-government community sector
- private sector unions – the Airlines industry Union ("white collar" Airlines workers), information technology workers union and the shipping and travel officers union (workers in travel agencies and shipping companies).

The ASU has lived the vision of its founders. We have maintained our size and influence whilst most unions with no resources or no potential to grow outside one industry have declined.

CONCERNS EMERGING OVER LABOR'S NATIONAL IR PLANS.

Concerns are beginning to emerge over Labor's plans for a new National IR system. Labor has now released the 10 national minimum standards which will be contained in law. These are supposed to sit alongside the 10 additional matters that can go in a Modern Award. The problem is that some of the 10 standards are lower than current entitlements. In addition it is unclear how the standards will link to awards, whether or not the Independent umpire (the AIRC or its replacement) will be able to sort out disputes and whether once Awards are made, they can be improved.



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