



One step forward Two steps back

No rosters – More automation and job losses – Outsourcing job losses – Consultation Mayhem

Discussions on your new EBA with Hutchison Ports Australia (HPA) took place over three days in Brisbane on the 8-10 October. At this stage both parties are working through respective logs of claims. The MUA is seeking to understand what HPA actually wants out of this agreement. The company claims remain extreme, but what is written by HPA is not always what is meant and this complicating factor makes progressing through the log of claims difficult and leaves the MUA guessing and having to ask a lot of questions to get to the bottom of what HPA really want or mean.

In a number of areas where clarity has been reached the company claims will see the position of workers eroded and each member worse off.

Copying the Worker's Log of Claims

In a spectacular act of immaturity, it has become clear HPA have copied and applied a direct opposite of the MUA log of claims to the workforce. The company claims are an opposing mirror of the workers claims – not a reflection of what the company wants or needs in their terminal.

This allows HPA to come back on each of the workers claims and direct us back to the HPA log of claims. It's a circular process and provides nothing in terms of reaching an agreement.

Automation

This is an area of major contention. The company are saying they will be automating the remote Operating System (ROS) that controls the Auto Stacking Cranes (ASC).

HPA are of the view the ROS jobs will go and no one will be worse off. The MUA has challenged this thinking as it is fundamentally clear that jobs will be lost.

The company says that the new ROS system will operate without human intervention. In our view this is completely false. No evidence was provided as to how this huge leap in technology arose. No data was provided. We were told that automating

jobs will not see job losses. Less positions is a loss of jobs and that's what automation brings. It's pretty simple.

The company line on new automation that operates without human intervention is false and could not be substantiated by HPA.

Of concern HPA have not ruled out that the new ROS operators will operate remotely from Hong Kong. We cannot ever accept that jobs performed in an Australian terminal are operated from overseas.

The MUA will fight this union-busting automation. It is a threshold issue for the union.

Rosters

What rosters? HPA don't want rosters.

HPA want everyone in terminals to revert back to the original start-up operating conditions in both maintenance and operations.

Family friendly and regularised rosters are the aim of workers who want some certainty in their lives.

We will pursue appropriate rostering and never concede a bulk and general arrangement in terminals.

Outsourcing

The MUA is seeking insourcing of work and to stop outsourcing. The company is seeking to outsource the following:

- Shift leader - outsourced
- Bus driver/first aid - outsourced
- R & D clerk - outsourced
- ASC operator - outsourced
- Reefer monitor - outsourced
- Maintenance store person – outsourced
- Allocator – outsourced
- All mooring to be removed and outsourced in Brisbane

This is an area of major difference between the MUA and HPA. All of the above company claims on outsourcing have been rejected by the negotiating team.

The days of hiving off wharfies work to contractors is over and is a major issue for the union and wharfies across the entire country.

We do not want a long protracted negotiation with HPA. We want an agreement that improves workers lives – not an agreement that undermines the entire industry.

Safety

This negotiation is fairly unique for the waterfront. Safety has not been an issue the union has ever seen a need to negotiate as a main feature of an agreement. Usually there is a level of joint cooperation on these issues.

So what's changed?

Never has a global terminal operator operated in Australia with such poor standards.

We also see these standards reflected internationally. We have seen safety disregarded in Sydney and Brisbane and have watched our comrades in Jakarta, in an almost identical terminal suffer a serious amount of workplace fatalities.

There is a systemic problem with waterfront safety at Hutchison terminals.

In a new development some of our fraternal comrades working at Hutchison terminals internationally will also lodge a claim dealing with safety and a regional safety committee.

We will be safe! We will go wherever we need to go and campaign however we need to campaign to see improvements in safety. Our lives must be recognised as precious. We will fight to make sure that safety is primary and not a subordinate to profitability.

Workers are pursuing a regional safety committee that brings together HPA workers across the Asia-Pacific region in an effort to save lives and protect working people.

Consultation

Consultation has been a key driver of workplace tensions in HPA terminals. Workers want to be consulted in their workplace and it is their right. While the agreement currently provides for robust consultation, the concern of the MUA is that consultation itself is not understood by HPA.

Our intent is to ensure the most robust forms of worker consultation and engagement occur in the workplace.

Building a Relationship

Since the 140-day dispute in 2015 tensions have been high at HPA.

Relationships are frayed and the MUA and its members are seeking to reinvent the relationship and start to try and build on a more consultative and cooperative approach.

This position has been put to the company by the MUA but met with a lacklustre response from the company which the union will continue to pursue.

It remains our intent in this agreement to see a functional relationship that avoids the many misinterpretations and unnecessary disputes that have been the hallmark of our relationship with Hutchison.

Having said this we will not resile from the fight to protect our lives and working conditions.