



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. 102 - Tuesday 5 September 2017

Vale Jim Steele – Vale Taffy Sweetensen – ASP EBA – Wharfies Meeting FWC Approves "Super-Union" Ballot – 'A New Frontier': The Little-Known Alternative to the 457 Visa PSV Driven Remotely - Martin Thomas New Book

Vale Jim Steele

DEAR COMRADES IT'S my sad duty to let you know Comrade Jim Steele has just passed away in Brisbane following a recent fall. He was with his immediate family and retired Presiding Officer Mick Carr.

Comrade Steele was a legend in the waterfront industry given his principled and enormous dedication to the Seamen's Union and subsequently the MUA where he was the joint Presiding Officer on amalgamation.



Jim held many positions in the union, originally in Melbourne and then subsequently as the SUA Branch Secretary in Queensland and MUA joint Branch Secretary in Brisbane.

Tough, wise, progressive and experienced Jim was one of the long term anchors of the senior leadership of the SUA and was pivotal in shaping the strength solidarity and comradeship in the MUA in the unions important first years following the merger as joint Presiding Officer together with Jim Donovan.

His dry humour, great respect from the rank and file and socialist commitment ensured great love and loyalty from all who worked with him and knew him.

Jim recently turned 90 and his passing punctuates part the end of a generation of trade unionists on the waterfront that won conditions, fought campaigns and dedicated their lives to the achievement of international peace progress and socialism for all working men and women in general and maritime workers in particular.

I have spoken to comrade Carnegie and we will keep

you informed of the details of Comrade Steele's funeral details in Brisbane. I have also extended our deepest condolences to Jim's family on behalf of our union.

Vale Jim Steele, comrade, friend and trusted brother to so many now at peace and rest after a long voyage.

Yours in unity
Paddy Crumlin

Hi Paddy, Thanks for the beautiful words that encapsulate a life well lived and dedicated to the working class and trade union movement . He left an enormous impression on us all.

We will make sure that Jim gets the send off he deserves.

In Solidarity
Bob

Funeral Details for Jim Steele

THE FUNERAL SERVICE for Jim Steele will be held at Mt Thompson Crematorium, East Chapel, 329 Nursery Road, Holland Park at 1.30pm on Friday 8 September followed by a wake to be held at the Mt Gravatt Hotel, 1315 Logan Road, Mt Gravatt.

There will be transport leaving the union rooms at 12.30pm sharp for members wishing to attend the service. The Branch office will be closed at 12.00 noon on Friday.

Vale Taffy Sweetensen

DEAR COMRADES, it has been a sad day for our union. Taffy Sweetensen has also passed away. Another giant of the Australian and international trade union movement Taff has been in poor health for a period of time now.

Known and loved for his toughness and leadership Taffy came from an international comradeship of the sea and socialist movement from a time when class struggle, war and the constant campaign for peace defined his trade union and seafaring life.

A veteran of the war against racism, Taffy went to sea as a fireman in coal burning ships and distinguished himself by his measured and patient determination to achieve social justice, his untiring work and commitment to seafarers and their rights in Australia and internationally, a deep and unabridged commitment to family and a working class leadership defined by constant struggle and achievement.

A lifelong communist he helped shape in particular the Australian maritime and trade union landscape through constancy in wisdom founded in experience and an unrelenting commitment to the rank and file of our union and the working class movement.

He stood easily alongside great working class leaders like Elliot V Elliot, Pat Clancy, Pat Geraghty and Tom McDonald as well as he shared company with every union activist and member.

He was prominent in particular in the shaping of Australia's offshore industry and his legacy unfolds every day as we continue to struggle for the right of just recognition and job security in that industry at a critical time for the Australian trade union movement.

His wife Shirley and children stood their ground alongside him in the constancy of the political and industrial demands placed upon him.

Taffy was a true inspiration packaged in a demeanour of understatement but steely determination and there are many legendary stories of his time with us and many that have passed.

Taffy and Jim Steele enjoyed a lifelong friendship founded in quiet certainty of the importance of our union and the political and industrial work that accompanied the defence and construction of seafarers rights in particular. For both to pass on the same day is an extraordinary demonstration of two lives unfolding in close harmony dedicated to finding a better life for the working men and women under their stewardship.

Vale Taffy, tough to the end. Never asking for anything in return for a life time commitment to workers, their families and their just entitlement.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Jim and the family. Rest surely my old comrade.

In unity
Paddy

ASP EBA

THE PARTIES TO the MUA/ASP EBA met in Melbourne on Wednesday 30 August. The MUA was represented by Jason Campbell, Ian Bray and Bob Carnegie. The areas in which we were apart were discussed in depth and an agreement in principle all but reached.

We have developed an EBA, that at its core, is a commitment and graduated return to equality on the job. I think of great importance will be the integrating of the service step component into aggregate wage and thus eliminating a situation which was developing where seafarers doing the identical job were being paid at differing rates,

Comrade Campbell from the Tasmanian Branch will be doing the drafting part of the Agreement and will be meeting with Phil Jones, HR Manager of ASP in the next week to clarify and make sure the drafting of the document fully reflects the Agreement reached.

It was a pleasure working with Comrades Campbell and Bray and finally getting to a foreseeable conclusion gives the Queensland Branch renewed vigour in the campaign we are going to run to make sure that the Australian crewed participation on Rio's vessels will be SIGNIFICANTLY increased.

Wharfies Meetings 31 August 2017

THE BRANCH HELD a series of Wharfies meetings and a BBQ with BCT and DP World members from 10.00am through to 4.30pm on Thursday 31 August 2017. The meetings were fairly well attended and debate was lively and open. It was terrific to see Wharfies from other areas taking the time out to meet and listen to other wharfies.

EBA's in my opinion have by their very nature caused a type of company centric approach to the problems we face as workers.

The great issues Wharfies face are INDUSTRY not company related. Issues such as automation and casualisation and interhire are industry wide problems that need industry wide solutions.

EBA's are going to be with us for a while longer and we have to negotiate in that frame work HOWEVER the more we do to breakdown the barbed wire fences that falsely divide us the stronger our union will become.

We will be holding monthly Wharfie meetings usually a day or two after the Branch Monthly Meeting.

FWC Approves "Super-Union" Ballot

Sourced from: <https://www.workplaceexpress.com.au/>

MUA AND TCFU members will vote on their unions' merger with the CFMEU in a ballot that will close in late November, after a ruling by the FWC today.

Deputy President Val Gostencnik approved the unions' joint application under [s44](#) of the Fair Work Registered Organisations Act to submit the proposal to a ballot that will open on September 28 and close on November 23.

He exempted the CFMEU under [s46](#) from balloting its members because they are not required to vote when the number of members that would be admitted is lower than the 25% trigger.

The combined membership of the MUA and TCFU amounts to 16,022, or about 12.5% of the CFMEU's complement, the union's barrister, Tony Slevin, told a hearing on August 4.

Deputy President Gostencnik also acceded to a TCFU's request to hold attendance ballots under [s47](#) in 27 workplaces (see [Related Article](#)).

He rejected AMOU and AIMPE objections that the proposed name of the merged union – the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU) – would cause confusion.

Deputy President Gostencnik also accepted that technical objections raised by AMMA and the MBA had been addressed by each of the unions putting a "corrected" amalgamation scheme to their committees of management.

The Turnbull Government has introduced legislation aimed at blocking the merger (see [Related Article](#)). [Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union; Maritime Union of Australia; Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia \[2017\] FWC 4353 \(31 August 2017\)](#)

[FWC home page for CFMEU/MUA/TCFU merger proposal](#)

Note: This article initially said Commissioner Nick Wilson decided the matter, but this was quickly corrected.

'A New Frontier': The Little-Known Alternative to the 457 Foreign Worker Visa

By *Fergus Hunter, Eryk Bagshaw* sourced from:

<http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/4897101/the-little-known-alternative-to-the-457-visa/?cs=7>

A LITTLE-KNOWN visa category has become a "new frontier for unscrupulous employers" looking to exploit cheap foreign labour at the expense of Australian workers.

The 400 visa, designed to parachute international specialists into short-term roles, has emerged as a "sleeper" category with looser restrictions than the 457 foreign worker visa, which was recently abolished by the Turnbull government in a high-profile "Australians first" crackdown.

The decision to abolish 457 temporary work visas is presented by Malcolm Turnbull as putting the interests of Australians first.

In the past decade, hundreds of thousands of workers have been employed on short stay visa categories, including the 400's predecessor the 456, with at least 11 cases before the Fair Work Ombudsman. But experts warn despite the examples of exploitation, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has little detail on the employment of these workers.

Among them, Chinese labourers flown in to dismantle the former Mitsubishi car plant in the Adelaide Hills paid \$1.90 an hour, Filipino metal fabricators paid \$4.90 an hour to install animal feed mills in NSW, and nine Indonesian timber workers flown into Tasmania and promised bonuses when they returned home.

"The fact that a couple of exploitation cases exist really shows that there is a real opportunity for this visa to be

exploited," said Joanna Howe, an associate Professor in Law at the University of Adelaide.

"They have no local or community networks, they have very little English, it's very difficult for them to even know that the fair work ombudsman exists."

Documents seen by Fairfax Media show 400 visas are sometimes approved within 24 hours with seemingly minimal oversight. Despite the government's requirement that the work be "highly specialised", the visa has been used to fill semi-skilled positions for which apparently qualified Australian applicants were available.

In 2015, Australia hosted the Cricket World Cup but local camera crews with decades of broadcasting experience were snubbed by the International Cricket Council for a crew from Singapore. In the same year the [Spirit of Tasmania](#) employed 44 per cent of its workers on 400 visas for a \$31.5 million refurbishment.

In several cases, multinational shipping companies are employing overseas engineers on 400 visas for Australian work despite the availability, according to the union, of local specialists searching for employment and being knocked back when they apply.

The revelations appear to challenge the department's eligibility criteria, which say the visa "encapsulates highly specialised skills, knowledge or experience that can assist Australian business and cannot reasonably be found in the Australian labour market".



The sleeper category

The subclass 400 visa was introduced by the former Labor government in early 2013, superseding two previous visa categories. In 2013-14, the visa's first full year of operation, 40,000 were granted. It peaked at 55,000 in 2015-16.

PricewaterhouseCoopers immigration partner Carter Bovard said the 400 series provided organisations with a tool to fill gaps where the talent has not been found in the local market.

"Australian companies have become more global and have required more skills from overseas," he said. "A lot of them need growth opportunities in the Asia Pacific." Dr Chris F Wright, a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney Business School said he could see the visa servicing the needs of particular businesses.

"If they want to transfer people internally from New York or Shanghai into the Sydney office of a multinational, but that would apply to relatively few organisations," he said.

The number of 400 visas approved now equals half the number of 457 visas handed out when Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull axed the category in April over concerns foreigners were taking Australian jobs.

"We know a lot about the 457," said Dr Wright. "There is evidence about where they worked and for how long.

"For the 400 there is not much information at all. It's a sleeper visa category not much attention has been paid to it."

Dr Howe said the lack of transparency meant it was easier to use the 400 than the 457 "for any unscrupulous employer that wants to subvert Australian law, that wants to use a migrant workforce because they aren't unionised and less likely to complain".

In January, a Freedom of Information request from Dr Howe and colleague Irene Nikoloudakis showed the Department had "no documents" referring to the number of visa holders by occupation.

Fairfax Media has found up to half of 46,000 400 visas in 2016-17 and for each of the five years the category has existed have been granted to workers in "not specified" or "other services" categories, according to official figures released for the first time.

Following that, the largest categories were "professional, scientific and technical", "arts and recreation services" and "information media and telecommunications".

Among the hardest hit, unions claim, are maritime industries. In shipping, industrial disputes and accusations of exploitation have been prevalent for years, with foreign workers on two WA rigs in 2008 and 2011 paid as little as \$US3-\$US8 an hour.

The Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers says several ships operating in Australian waters are currently using workers on subclass 400 visas when they shouldn't be. There are at least 70 qualified Australians ready to work, according to the union.

'Handed out like lollies'

Based in Perth, marine engineer Mark Jones has been unemployed for 18 months. He has been in the



Mark Jones at the Fremantle harbor in Western Australia.
Photo: Tony McDonough

industry for 35 years and says he has never struggled to find work before.

"I have applied for over 60 positions in the last 18 months. Often they are through internet advertising and very rarely do I even get a reply," Mr Jones, 60, told Fairfax Media. "They are sometimes saying it's because there are so many people applying. But if that's the case, if there are so many people applying, why are they being filled by subclass 400 visa holders?"

Mr Jones said many of his former colleagues had now left the industry altogether after struggling to find work.

AIMPE says positions that were previously being filled by 457 visa holders are now being filled by 400 visa holders, accusing multiple companies of abusing the category.

According to the union, RN Dredging, a Danish company, is operating a vessel on the Gold Coast with three Danish engineers. The union has written to Immigration Minister Peter Dutton saying dozens of qualified locals are available and the visas were sought with "incorrect information".

RN Dredging rejects this, with a spokesman telling Fairfax Media the company boosted the size of the crew – adding nine Australians to the eight foreign workers – "to ensure that no one would be able to say that we abuse the visa system".

AIMPE has also asked Mr Dutton to cancel subclass 400 visas held by workers on the POSH Arcadia, a vessel being operated off Western Australia by Singaporean company PACC Offshore Services Holdings. The union claims at least 31 foreign citizens are working in positions that could be filled by locals.

A spokeswoman for POSH told Fairfax Media the company employs Australians "wherever possible where they possess the necessary skills, competency and experience", saying there was a mix of local and international workers in its current operations.

When the company cannot find appropriate Australians, the spokesman said it provides pathways to employment for locals, including first-hand experience, to bring skills up to the necessary level.

Labor MP Julian Hill said temporary skilled visas "should only be available when there's a genuine skills gap that Australian workers can't fill" and accused the Immigration Minister of instituting a "fake" crackdown.

"It appears that some employers are still finding ways to bypass the new skills shortage lists and avoid labour market testing," Mr Hill said. "Reports that 400 visas are being handed out like lollies by Peter Dutton's department are disturbing."

A spokesman for the Immigration Minister said 400 visa decisions were made "only after full and careful consideration of all relevant information" and the government was "cleaning up Labor's mess".

"The government is committed to ensuring that Australian workers have priority and that foreign workers

are a supplement to, and not a substitute for, Australian workers," the spokesman said.

"Labor mismanaged Australia's work visa programs, just like they mismanaged Australia's borders." In July, the government announced a review of the visa system with a view to simplifying it. The review – which has sought input from the public – includes consideration of the "role and future requirements" of the 400 visa.

PSV Off Scotland Driven Remotely from San Diego

By Sam Chambers, Sourced from: <http://splash247.com/psv-off-scotland-driven-remotely-san-diego/>

THE DAWN OF the drone shipping era has come a step closer. Finnish technology group Wartsila has revealed details of a landmark test run whereby a PSV was controlled remotely 8000km away.

The testing, which involved driving the vessel through a sequence of manoeuvres using a combination of Dynamic Positioning (DP) and manual joystick control, was carried out on August 21 off the North Sea coast of Scotland in collaboration with Gulfmark Offshore, an American OSV operator.



The remote control navigating was carried out from the Wartsila office located in San Diego, California.

The vessel, the Highland Chieftain is an 80m platform supply vessel already fitted with a Wartsila Nacos Platinum package for Navigation, Automation and Dynamic Positioning systems, as well as a Wartsila drives package. For the test, additional software was temporarily added to the DP system in order to route data over the vessel's satellite link to the onshore work station in California.

The Wartsila testing was carried out using standard bandwidth onboard satellite communication. No land-based technology was used for the communications between the vessel and the remote operator work station. The retrofitting of the DP software was completed within just 30 hours.

The successful test was conducted over an almost four hour period during which time the vessel was driven through a series of manoeuvres at both high and low speeds. All the test procedures carried out went as planned, Wartsila reported today.

More pilot projects are envisaged soon by Wartsila including one looking at automated docking procedures.

Commenting on the news Kate Adamson, a regular *Splash* contributor and the founder of *Futurenavitics*, said: "This is another step forward by an innovative company investing in building the smart marine ecosystem which will power the intelligent transportation systems of the future. Prioritising interoperability and simplicity and putting the customer at the centre is now absolutely critical.

Unite Asks Barrister to Examine Worker Blacklisting Collusion Claims

Union chief Len McCluskey instructs barrister to compile report on claims that officials passed information to blacklisters.

By Rob Evans sourced from:

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/aug/29/unite-asks-barrister-to-examine-worker-blacklisting-collusion-claims?CMP=share_btn_link

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST TRADE union has commissioned a barrister to examine allegations that union officials colluded with a covert blacklisting operation financed by major firms to prevent certain workers from being employed.

The move has been ordered by the head of Unite, Len McCluskey, and follows [calls by blacklisted workers to set up an independent inquiry](#) into the claims of collusion, which is alleged to have spanned at least 20 years to 2009.



The move by Len McCluskey follows calls by blacklisted workers to set up an independent inquiry into the alleged collusion. Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

The barrister is to scrutinise documents that were disclosed in a high court lawsuit that led to construction firms apologising and [paying compensation amounting to around £75m to 771 blacklisted workers](#).

Some documents appeared to show that trade union officials had passed information to the blacklisters, including private warnings not to hire specific workers they deemed to be politically awkward. Individual workers were labelled "militant" or a "troublemaker" by union officials, according to the files.

In signed statements, managers who ran the blacklist alleged that union officials wanted to prevent disruption on industrial sites and helped to deny jobs to some of their own members.

In an internal letter to colleagues, McCluskey, Unite's general secretary, said: "There have recently been calls for us to consider all documents in the high court litigation to see if there is any evidence of officer collusion in blacklisting. I have committed to undertaking that review."

He added that he had instructed an unnamed barrister from [Doughty Street Chambers](#), a London firm specialising in human rights, to review the documents and compile a report. "If there is any evidence arising from the documents, it will be acted upon," he said. The documents disclosed during the high court case detail how more than 40 construction firms stored [confidential files on more than 3,200 workers, recording their political and employment histories.](#)

Managers consulted the files and denied work to individuals, often for long periods, [whom they considered to be active trade unionists or troublemakers.](#) The workers, some of whom campaigned for improved health and safety on construction sites, were not told why they had been refused work.

The blacklisting operation, which drew on files going back to the 1970s, was [declared to be unlawful](#) following a raid in 2009 by a watchdog, the information commissioner.

More than 40 blacklisted workers have pressed for an inquiry as they believe the [allegations amount to a "running sore"](#) for the trade union movement.

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Dave Smith, their spokesman, said: "This announcement is a welcome first step at the beginning of the process. I have already seen many of the documents and the report will undoubtedly find that there is some evidence of potential collusion."

"The question is how much weight you give to the documentary evidence, which is precisely why we will need an independent investigation, which hears from both the officials and the blacklisted union members."

Alan Wainwright, [a former construction industry manager who helped blow the whistle](#) on the blacklisting, has [been highlighting the alleged collusion](#) for more than a decade. "I have been ignored. This latest step goes absolutely nowhere near enough for what needs to happen," he said.

In the legal documents, Dudley Barratt, a manager involved in running the blacklist, said officials in a number of trade unions would "occasionally tell me names of individuals who they thought should not be employed on sites" as they might undermine the firm and the official trade union activities.

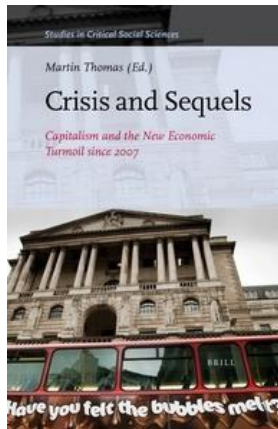
Another manager, Daniel O'Sullivan, said union officials passed on information about individuals as they were "concerned to prevent unnecessary disruption on site". Some of the allegations relate to previous trade unions that have been absorbed into [Unite](#).

Many of the blacklisted workers won compensation last

year after their legal action was funded by Unite and other unions. Unite is currently backing 70 more workers who are taking legal action.

A Unite spokesperson said: "Arrangements are being made for an inquiry, but we are not in a position to go into its detail as we do not wish to undermine its integrity or prejudice its outcome."

Martin Thomas – New Book



OUR GOOD FRIEND of the Branch, Martin Thomas has edited a new book *Crisis and Sequels*.

Available from:

<http://www.brill.com/products/book/crisis-and-sequels>

As the economic crash of 2007-8 and its sequels developed, neoliberal economists often said that economic theory can never cope with such eruption, and left-minded economists and political economists struggled to find answers. This book documents discussions as they developed; an introduction and an afterword tell the story of the crisis, and offer syntheses and angles on some of the debated issues. What were the chief imbalances in the world economy? Is US hegemony breaking down? Were falling profit rates at the root of the crash, and if so why were they falling? How does "financialisation" reshape capitalism? Why did neoliberalism prove so resilient? How might the repercussions lead to it being subverted from the right or from the left?

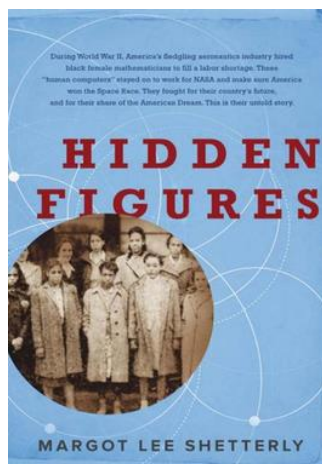


Martin discussing his new book

Readers interested in understanding the economic crisis; people with a new or renewed interest in Marxist or Marxist-influenced economic theory; and socialist activists can purchase the book from:

<http://www.brill.com/products/book/crisis-and-sequels>.

Book Corner Hidden Figures



The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race - by Margot Lee Shetterly
SHETTERLY'S BOOK ABOUT Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, Dorothy Vaughan and other black women workers in the US space program has now been made into a popular film, released in cinemas in early 2017 and

now available on DVD.

The book is not as well-crafted as the film - it is sometimes gushing and verbose - but the film is far from being (does not pretend to be) a documentary. The book tells you more about what actually happened.

Black women "computers" were first recruited in large numbers during World War 2, as the US military aircraft industry was ramped up from marginal output to huge production. The research centre in Langley, Virginia, later to become NASA, was part-segregated because the US armed forces were segregated then, and anyway Virginia was one of the most segregated states.

In the film, the driving forces of desegregation at Langley are shown as the black women's determination to stand up for themselves, which was real, and a benign top boss, which is fiction.

One other real factor was that the Langley scientists and engineers, many from the north-eastern states, a fair few Jewish, were mostly liberal. None, according to Shetterly, was really a campaigner, but they mostly disliked discrimination against black people. (Some were a bit more equivocal about discrimination against women).

The other driver was US federal government policy, in turn driven by the civil rights struggles of the mass of African-Americans and by the left.

Virginia was so racist that when the US Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional, in January 1959, the state repealed its compulsory education law and one county in Virginia shut down all its public schools for five years rather than integrate.

But the US federal government could not afford to have its star research facility seen as segregated. Particularly not when, globally, in the Cold War, the USA was seeking to have countries with non-white populations ally with the USA rather than the USSR. *Martin Thomas*

Harley Raffle

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