



# 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. 117 - 09 February 2018

**A Big Year Ahead for the Branch - Phil Hansen Report Back - Tug Members Donate to Oaky Creek Miners  
Diary Update - Streets Dispute Redundancies Book Corner - Decline in Trade Union Membership Continued**

## Back from Leave, A Big Year Ahead for the Branch

By Bob Carnegie

I RETURNED FROM leave a couple of days early due to work commitments. Firstly, I would like to thank the rank and file who supported the Branch leadership and in particular, young Phil Hansen, in his four weeks of relieving work and from the reports I have heard so far he has done a good, honest job. Well done Phil.

Despite what one might hear from certain union leaders right through the spectrum say, and sadly may even believe, a union leader does not need to be an experimental physicist working on string theory or have the legal acuity of the Chief Justice of the High Court (as sadly too many think they are). All he/she needs to be a decent union official is hard working, literate, HONEST, a person who treats your problems seriously and does their best each day to look after members in particular and the working class generally.

This year the Branch is concentrating on a number of important areas:

1. Intra State Shipping and our battle to get Rio to employ more Australian Seafarers. Also, the Branch under my leadership, will be submitting a comprehensive paper on coastal shipping for a state government enquiry into area.
2. Financial Planning - All EBA's under this Branch's influence will be fighting hard to have a financial planning aspect built into their EBAs meaning that in the life of an Agreement, each member will have access to an agreed financial planner to assist them in their financial health. This I believe is a pressing need and the unnecessary, financial horror stories that I have witnessed over the last few years has made this for me an important priority. Bad financial health leads to, in many cases, bad mental and relationship health. It's all interwoven.
3. A much more active Branch - the Branch leadership and rank and file activists need much more help if we are going to be the type of Branch we should be ie: Thinking, Active,

Socially Conscious and Militant. They are all interlinked.

4. Wharfie Meetings - the Branch is working to implement monthly or bi-monthly meetings to be held to keep wharfies better informed and to work out problems.
5. Social Activities - the Branch will be holding a number of social activities beginning with a bare foot bowls function. We need ideas of what members want.
6. 20 years since the Patrick's Lockout Function. A function is to be held beginning at 4 pm on April 6 to commemorate this massive industrial dispute. It will be a big day/night.

Members will be kept up to date on events as they come to hand.

Readers of the newsletter will also be able to read snippets of my recent leave in the coming month. Don't collapse from anticipation as I'm thinking of putting in a slide show 😊.

*Bob Carnegie - Queensland Branch Secretary - IDC Joint Coordinator Oceania Region*

## Phil Hansen - Relief Official - Report Back



FIRSTLY, I WOULD like to thank the Queensland officials, organiser and office staff for pointing me the right direction with my jam packed four weeks as a relief in office. To the members, it is very humbling to have been given the opportunity to represent you all and for that I cannot thank you

enough! We are a proud union. A union of principles and progress can only be made through the strength of the rank and file.

In my four weeks I have done my best to get to the wharves, tugs, ferries, barges, blue water members, past members to go along with EA meetings, signing members, trying to reboot the youth movement, new

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

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branch apparel and the humbling experience of meeting members that are retiring after years of being MUA members.

The struggle is real with the continued attack on the blue water with many good men and women struggling for work and the sustained attack on the towage sector that has caused redundancies.

After being in office for the past four weeks I can honestly say we are making progress, its bloody slow but we as a union are pushing ahead doing our best for our members putting our members first. It's not called the struggle for nothing but together let's take on anyone who wants to get in our way of a democratic, safe, fair working life. *In Solidarity - Phil Hansen*

### **Queensland Branch Tug Members Donate to Oaky Creek Miners**

MUA Queensland Branch members from Gladstone Tugs stand in solidarity with the Oaky Creek miners.



They have donated \$4000 in support of their locked out comrades. Brisbane tug members also donated \$805 in support of the Oaky Creek miners. Much appreciated. UNITED WE STAND!

### **MUA Diary Update**

THE LATEST UPDATE for the MUA diaries is they will be ready to be dispatched to the Branches on Monday 12/02/2018. They are expected to be delivered to Queensland Branch between 12/02/2018 and 16/02/2018. Thanks to the members for your patience.

### **Streets Workers Secure Redundancies after FWC Ruling**

Sourced from:

[https://www.workplaceexpress.com.au/nl06\\_news\\_selected.php?act=2&nav=12&selkey=56467&utm\\_source=weekly+email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=subscriber+email&utm\\_content=article+headline&utm\\_term=Streets%20workers%20secure%20redundancies%20after%20FWC%20ruling](https://www.workplaceexpress.com.au/nl06_news_selected.php?act=2&nav=12&selkey=56467&utm_source=weekly+email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=subscriber+email&utm_content=article+headline&utm_term=Streets%20workers%20secure%20redundancies%20after%20FWC%20ruling)

Hi Members, this is an interesting case of an OVERSUBSCRIBED redundancy offer relating from the Streets dispute. I think members who take the time will find the decision of interest. *Bob Carnegie*

IN A SURPRISING postscript to last year's boycott of Streets ice creams over job losses and roster changes at the company's western Sydney factory, the AMWU this week found itself back before the FWC supporting 15 workers wanting out after an oversubscribed redundancy round (see Related Article).

In weighing each case on its merit, Commissioner

Bernie Riordan noted that the recently-approved Unilever Australia Trading Ltd, (trading as Streets Ice Cream, Minto) Enterprise Agreement 2017 included a provision that 50 full-time positions would be made redundant, with preference given to employees whose role had either "completely disappeared or had significantly and substantially changed".

"Preference was also given to those employees who expressed an expression of interest to take redundancy on compassionate grounds due to the detrimental effect that working the new roster would have on them or their family," he said.

Turning his attention to the 15 employees appealing the result of the company's review, Commissioner Riordan said he understood "their frustration that, after reaching the difficult decision to apply for a voluntary redundancy, surprisingly, more than 50 of their fellow employees also lodged an expression of interest".

Streets, however, had identified that "each of the employees. . . [is] a valued and skilled member of staff that they wanted to retain in the business to help make the plant more productive, efficient and profitable".

After giving each employee an opportunity "to highlight and expand on their original redundancy application", the commissioner ultimately found six entitled to redundancies on compassionate grounds that included carer responsibilities and health issues.

The remainder had their applications rejected – one despite the commissioner's sympathy for the effect of the roster changes on his regular Saturday golf games.

"It is unfortunate when an employer's request for expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy is oversubscribed," observed Commissioner Riordan.

"Unsuccessful candidates justifiably feel disappointed.

"In this circumstance, one large benefit is that the unsuccessful candidates are maintaining a well-paid job in a modern and clean working environment.

"Those unsuccessful candidates can also take pride that Streets see them as valued employees who can assist in making the Minto plant more efficient, competitive and profitable."

In November, Streets' parent company Unilever responded to a three-week boycott of its most popular ice creams by tabling the new agreement for its Minto factory workers.

The architect of the successful #streetsfreesummer campaign, AMWU NSW secretary Steve Murphy, told Workplace Express at the time he hoped the company had learnt that, in future, "it would be better to put our guns back in their holsters, sit down together and not operate through loopholes and legal advice".

The dispute ignited in August when Unilever applied to terminate a nominally expired 2013 deal covering about 150 workers at its ice-cream factory.

At the time Murphy said that in hitting the "nuclear option" the manufacturer of Gaytime, Magnum and Paddle Pops was forcing workers to take a 46% pay cut



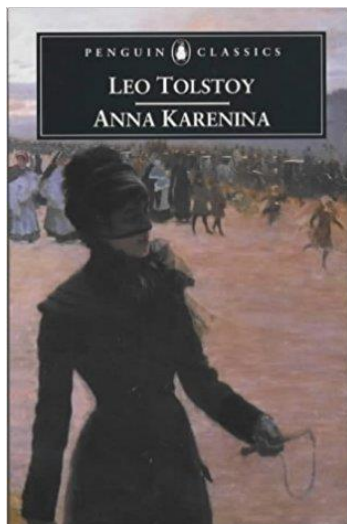
by reverting to the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Manufacturing Award.

"Automotive, Food, Metals, Engineering, Printing and Kindred Industries Union" known as the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) v Unilever Australia Ltd T/A Streets Ice-Cream Minto [2018] FWC 752 (6 February 2018)

## Book Corner

### **Anna Karenina - by Leo Tolstoy (1877)**

*Review by Allan Gardiner*



TWO PEOPLE SO in love they mean everything to each other - no-one can deny that is the ideal state, right? Wrong! According to Tolstoy at least, and he's got a point. Anna's rich society marriage is a travesty of true human relationship. But when she sacrifices all to be with her soul-mate, Vronsky, the result is much worse for everyone, especially her.

Anna and Vronsky are victims of the romantic ideas they get from the English and French novels they read. These ideas in turn derive from the full-blown Romantic Movement that rebelled against both the decadent old aristocratic order and the brash new capitalist values. But believing that love conquers all is a wish-fulfilment fantasy.

Mind you, Tolstoy's alternative is a bit of a bad joke too. In the novel, Levin, a stand-in for Tolstoy himself, is presented as heading in the right direction: back to a simple peasant life, modernised just enough. If you want to know how that worked out for him, read the very entertaining biographical novel 'The Last Station' by Jay Parini.

Don't expect the film versions, such as the recent Keira Knightley one, to tell what is really in this novel. The films give the audience what it wants: a love story in beautiful clothes and rich ballrooms. Give Tolstoy his due; he was disgusted by the riches of his own aristocratic class, even though he enjoyed his share of its privileges. He seems to have become more ascetic only when he was too old to indulge himself as before.

### **Decline in Trade Union Membership Continued**

*By Bob Carnegie and Martin Thomas*

THE CRISES OF the 1970s themselves galvanised thousands of new young activists. They generated new radical organisations, left-wing groups within the CPA (at least up to 1975), and even left-wing stirrings in the ALP. In Australia as elsewhere, the new groups of young activists were just not strong enough to make a decisive change in the direction of the labour movement, or even to establish a continuing political presence strong enough

to generate an increasing flow of sparky new organisers for the movement. With all the political weaknesses of the new left-wing currents (the heritage of ideas on which they could draw had been heavily "overgrown" in the previous decades), they could not break through the accumulated tangle of "overgrowth", both ideological and organisational, on the movement. Or not quickly enough: the bosses were moving faster.

Internationally, unions were and are slow to respond to capital becoming more and more transnational. There are now some dozens of "global framework agreements" between global union alliances and transnational corporations. But work for such agreements started very late - the first was in 1988, the second in 1995 - and many of them commit the corporation to no more than respecting ILO conventions. The International Trade Union Confederation runs no international campaigns, but is focused instead on "advocacy within the major global institutions".

The installation of neoliberalism took specially hurtful form in Australia. Elsewhere, in Britain for example, neoliberalism could be brought in only after governments and employers had, through head-on confrontation, imposed great defeats on the labour movement. In Australia, the changes in industrial relations legislation were installed by Labor governments in 1983-96 with the positive support of the union leaders, not only the ALP-aligned union leaders but also the CPA-aligned and the SPA-aligned. In the name of "realism", in the name of a vision which had been reduced to nudging the powers-that-be into incremental concessions, they surrendered. It was not that the economic shifts in the world market made it impossible to fight; rather, the inability to fight of the union leaders let those economic shifts be carried through on capitalist terms, thus further weakening the unions.

From about 1999 through the first years of the 21st century, there was a new wave of radical activism among young people, represented in the "global justice" movement which gathered at protests at meetings of the IMF, WTO, etc., the World Social Forums and in organising networks like Students Against Sweatshops in the USA, No Sweat in Britain, ATTAC in France and other countries; the protests against the 2003 invasion of Iraq; and climate activism. In Australia in September 2000, over 20,000 young people encircled the World Economic Forum for three days in an anti-capitalist protest.

That those youth mobilisations eventually ebbed is no surprise. The labour movement has always, among all the varied "social movements" which arise in capitalist societies, been unique in its permanence and durability, which is why, despite all the setbacks of the last decades, it remains much more potent than most of its leaders think. The surprise is that the wave of mobilisations had so little carry-forward in bringing new workplace activists into the labour movement.

Part of it must have been the hesitant condition of the political left. After 1989-91 the Communist Parties, already low on morale and numbers, collapsed almost everywhere. Whatever else about them, they had recruited and trained young people to become union activists: now the presence of "CP"-minded people in the unions became almost entirely one of top leaders, keen to keep their positions, but lacking any drive to draw in and educate new young people.

Those Communist Parties, or the states they promoted as models of "socialism", or a selection from those states (Cuba though not the USSR, for example), had heavily shaped and influenced the left (including left wings in social democracy, and including many of the most dissident groups) for decades. The political poisons which seeped out from them still infect the terrain of the left. Excavating and rebuilding healthy ground takes time. The new young activists hesitated to call themselves "socialists", instead using slogans like "another world is possible" or "smash capitalism and replace it with something nicer".

And part of it was many of the young activists being siphoned off into NGOs and into full-time union organiser jobs.

There is no reason to idealise the old type of full-time union official who came up from the shop floor. To become a union official, for them, was often a way of moving from dirty, noisy, physically-strenuous jobs to wearing a suit, working easy hours in a quiet and clean office, mixing in a friendly way with managers, and having an income and a way of life similar to theirs. As one British trade-unionist critic put it over a century ago, "they at any rate in their own persons achieved the harmony of the classes".

The new young organisers straight, or almost straight, from university may well start off better. They have chosen to be union organisers when they could readily get easier and better-paid jobs. However, the principle under which they are employed is that they are accountable to the top union leaders, not to the members; and they are shifted from one organising task to another by the leaders, so they do not develop even informal accountability to any particular group of workers. If they make a "career" in the union movement - and after a while they may have little choice but that, or NGO jobs, or becoming Labor MPs, since few employers will like a resumé filled with union-organiser work - then they must do so by pleasing the top leaders, and adapting to the prevailing union-leadership culture.

Since the 1990s, many union leaders have announced a new "organising agenda", which they say is a feistier response to neoliberalism than the previous "service agenda" which "sold" union membership to workers as a portal for individual services, cheap insurance, legal advice, and so on. The results have been poor, though, and closer inspection indicates that the problem lies not in any invincibility of neoliberalism, but in the

weaknesses of the union approach.

Michael Crosby, a former Australian union leader who became director of the ACTU Organising Centre, then went to work for SEIU, the US union which has most pushed the "organising agenda", wrote the textbook for the "organising agenda": *Power at work: Rebuilding the Australian union movement* (2005). The back cover of the book carries a recommendation from Greg Combet, secretary of the ACTU until 2007, and the text praises Jeff Lawrence, Combet's successor as ACTU secretary. "Power at work"! But what sort of power, built how? A closer look at Crosby's prescriptions sheds light on why the ACTU under Combet and Lawrence performed much the same as the ACTU under Combet's right-wing predecessor Bill Kelty.

Crosby is candid about his "organising agenda" as being driven, top-down, by the top leaders of unions. The leaders should start by increasing union dues; merging union organisations to get economies of scale in administration and servicing; and thus freeing resources to employ an army of "external" organisers who will "think about nothing else other than building the union's power in non-member workplaces".

In approaching non-union workplaces, those organisers should be cunning and tenacious. Starting with one or two contacts - maybe workers who were union members elsewhere, and have kept up their union membership on transferring to the new workplace - they should assemble a list of names and addresses of workers, and systematically visit them at home.

Once they have sufficient numbers from home visits, they should construct a "map" of the workplace, enabling them to organise and monitor a process of spreading the union message from one worker to another in each section, on each shift, and to key "opinion-formers" among the workers.

Collective union activity in the workplace should generally start with low-key actions focused on low-key demands winnable from even the nastiest employers. Bit by bit they should build up to winning union recognition.

And - here comes the crux - once the union is recognised, it should ease off the pressure, and shift organisers to new areas. The union must not "abuse its agreement to act cooperatively by pursuing ongoing industrial action to settle disputes..." "The union office... will not normally be assessing grievances, looking for opportunities to organise and agitate workers to build power".

The aim is "to persuade employers that it is in their commercial self-interest to allow their employees to make a rational judgement about collective representation free of the intimidatory behaviour advocated by Big Business's political wing... [to] reach a mutually beneficial accommodation with employers".

Dismissing a class-struggle alternative by caricaturing it, Crosby states: "We cannot win... if we are suggesting that the endpoint of organising is the construction of a

workers' soviet which will deliver edicts to management backed up by ongoing collective action... [And] workers won't tolerate a state of permanent revolution..."

Crosby wants union activists in the workplaces, but with a carefully controlled level of activism. He advises full-time union officials, when "picking" delegates, to avoid "the loudest", "delegates... behaving badly, table-thumping, unreasonable demands, a refusal to be constructive in sorting out workplace problems". His complaint is not about "loudmouths" who may speak too long and too loud, shutting out other members. And not about "loudmouths" who get themselves discredited both with workers and with bosses by making promises and threats which they don't deliver on. No, Crosby bases this advice on complaints from managers who, he assures us, "were not anti-union", but had been put off by "loudmouth" union delegates. In other words, he advises full-time union officials not to "pick" delegates who cause fear and anxiety to managers by being tough and stubborn.

Unions, says Crosby, should not fight "unfair dismissal" cases where the member's case is too shaky. Doing so uses resources which should instead be directed to organising new sites. Once a workplace has been organised, unions should look for alternative ways for "workplace leaders" to "build the collective consciousness of the workers". He suggests "organising a blood-bank collection drive... [or] activities designed to build solidarity with workers in other countries". Another option is to mobilise union activists to "green" workplaces by switching off unnecessary lights, economising on use of paper, turning up air-conditioning temperatures, etc.

His recommendations on unions' political activity explicitly dismiss the idea of mobilising more union activists to use the positions to which unions are entitled in the Australian Labor Party. Instead, unions should have their leaders use the influence which the union's "power", demonstrated in rallies and protests, gives them when lobbying politicians.

He emphasises education within the unions, but sees it as top-down. "The vast bulk of our 1.8 million members haven't got a clue about what is happening in their society", so it falls to Crosby and his pals to give them that "clue".

"In the vast majority of unions", writes Crosby, "the leader has the ability to determine the future of every staff member there". His call is not to change that hierarchy but to use it more efficiently. He recommends less election of union officials, and stricter "performance management" of the officials by the union's top leaders. One of his arguments against elected officials are likely to be tied to the "constituency" of workers who elected them, and thus less manoeuvrable for purposes of organising new areas.

With some caricature, a Crosby-model union can be described as having five parts:

- a membership paying higher dues;
- a corps of workplace activists settled in "mutually beneficial accommodation with employers" but meanwhile keeping busy by organising among workers for blood donations, switching off unnecessary lights, etc.;
- one corps of full-time officials sitting in a call-centre dealing with members' individual grievances as efficiently as possible;
- another corps of full-time officials who are geared to "think about nothing" but recruitment in fresh workplaces, whose success is measured in new-member numbers regardless of durability or organisation, and who are constantly moved on from area to area so that they have no long-term accountability (even informal) to organised workers; and
- a union leader who can "determine the future of every staff member" and will get rid of the laggards and misfits among the officials.

It is a caricature because Crosby concedes that some bosses require not only one-off, but also repeated, pressure to nudge them into "mutually beneficial accommodation", and that unions must offer some democracy. But Crosby does want to push unions as far towards the caricature model as possible.

### Unity Bank News



**Unity  
Bank**  
*your bank at work*

All existing members and any new members can now have their family join Unity Bank. As

well as the usual suite of banking products we are able to offer a full range of insurances. We also offer travel needs such as foreign cash and travel cards. **For further details visit us or call our office (M-F 8.30-3.30) on 38994755 or 38994500 or simply check out our website [www.unitybank.com.au](http://www.unitybank.com.au) where you can find the complete range of products & services on offer.**

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## MUA "BAREFOOT BOWLS"



**WHERE?? - CANNON HILL BOWLS CLUB**  
18 Lang Street, Cannon Hill, QLD

**WHEN???** Thursday 22 February, 2018  
1600 - 2000

**WHAT???** Free Bar Tab, Food and Entertainment  
Partners and Kids welcome  
The first of many social events for 2018.

**WHY???** Have a fun afternoon and a yarn with like-minded people.



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