



TRANSPORT

NOW

AURIZON DISPUTE IN COURT

The future of 14 Aurizon Enterprise Agreements lies in the balance, following the conclusion of legal proceedings in the Fair Work Commission.

The hearing in Brisbane was a tense affair, with counsel for the RTBU arguing that the Commission is obliged under the law to take into account the views of employees and their circumstances. Putting workers back onto the Award would result in wage cuts in the order of \$20,000 for train drivers, forced redundancies, cuts to maternity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leave, and other cuts to conditions.

RTBU's legal counsel also argued that Aurizon could not back up its claim that continuing with the current Enterprise Agreement would be financially unviable, given that the company is highly profitable and is the dominant rail operator in the region.

National Secretary Bob Nanva said the RTBU was gearing up for a long and difficult campaign to protect the rights of Aurizon workers.

"A great deal is riding on the result of this dispute," Bob said.

"It's clear that Aurizon is playing a long game, and will continue to attack the rights of its workers regardless of the outcome of the current case in Fair Work Australia.

"We need to be prepared to take up the fight to Aurizon in the streets, in the media and in Parliament.

"If Aurizon gets away with it, other employers right around the country will be encouraged to take a shot at their Enterprise Agreements."



New Attack on Super

Having failed to pin anything on former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, the Royal Commission into Trade Unions has now turned its attention to industry funds.

Despite the superior financial performance of industry super funds, which have consistently delivered better returns to investors than corporate funds, Counsel assisting the Royal Commission Jeremy Stoljar SC has recommended changes to Federal laws to stop the use of industry funds from being mandated in enterprise agreements.

Unsurprisingly, the industry lobby group which represents the big four banks, the Financial Services Council, has come out in vocal support, claiming this would be a win for "competition".

The big end of town has strong support from the Liberal Government in Canberra, which has already flagged that it wants to reduce the number of worker representatives on industry fund boards.



Of course, a win for the big banks is hardly ever a win for consumers or workers.

Industry super funds are run for the benefit of members – not for shareholders. They also give workers a chance to have a say in how their superannuation savings are managed, so that money is invested wisely and ethically.

Industry super funds invest also heavily in Australian projects to generate local jobs, while also providing secure income to support workers in retirement.

But never underestimated the determination of the banks to get their grubby paws on your money. The future of super is likely to become a very big issue over the coming months.

Everyone's talking, but who's listening?

The RTBU has been taking every opportunity to push for greater investment in rail and public transport at the Federal Government level – meeting with both sides of national politics in early November.



National Secretary Bob Nanva represented rail and public transport a recent meeting of the Federal Government's Urban Policy Forum in Canberra, and at a meeting of Federal and State Government Transport meetings in Launceston. The RTBU was also a participant in the ALP's recent National Policy Forum.

Bob said that while both sides of politics were prepared to talk about rail and public transport, only one side was listening.

"It's clear that unions, the community sector and even the development lobby all agree that urban public transport is critical to building more efficient and productive cities.

"The Abbott Government, however, is just not getting the message.

"Frankly, anyone who thinks that toll-roads are the 'infrastructure of the 21st century' doesn't understand the needs of our cities, or the needs of our national economy.

"Investment in rail freight and public transport will be fundamental to tackling the economic costs of transport

congestion, to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and to meeting the forecast demand for freight movements into the future."

Commuters are clearly frustrated that public transport services are failing to keep pace with the growth of our cities, as a recent feature on [news.com.au](http://www.news.com.au/showed) showed (see <http://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-ideas/australias-public-transport-is-a-shambles-and-weve-had-enough/story-e6frfqd9-1227103244140>).

Bob told [news.com.au](http://www.news.com.au) that successive governments at both State and Federal level had "neglected the needs of public transport users for decades."

There are signs, however, that the Federal Opposition is taking a much more sensible stance on infrastructure policy.

"Labor will be releasing a new platform at the ALP National Conference next year," Bob said.

"From our discussion we're confident that both rail and public transport will feature strongly, so we're looking forward to seeing the final version of the new platform in 2015."

Revisiting high-speed rail in Australia

By Ned Talbot



New study by peak rail body into high-speed passenger rail estimates construction costs at half that of the Federal Government's 2013 report.

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) released a report this month boasting that high-speed passenger rail from Brisbane to Melbourne via Sydney may not be as expensive as originally estimates.

The report, titled the Potential Impacts of High Speed Passenger Rail to Eastern Australia, estimated the construction of the eastern rail network at \$63 billion, a whopping 45 per cent less than the previous Federal Government's \$114 billion estimate in 2013.

ARA CEO Bryan Nye explained that there are a host of countries around the world that are constructing high-speed rail lines for far less than the official Federal Government figures.

The report draws on a range of examples of high-speed rail networks in Asia, Europe and America arguing that Australia should leverage on overseas construction methodologies and approaches to achieve significant savings in construction.

Among the examples are China's high-speed rail, which cost as little as 16.84 million per kilometre to construct compared with Australian estimates of 65 million

according to the Department of Infrastructure and Transport Report.

The release of this study parallels a similar report by environmental think tank Zero Carbon Australia released in August, which priced the construction of a high-speed rail network on Australia's east coast at \$84 billion. The cost saving measures were made in bypassing major environmental obstacles and avoiding tunnelling where possible.

National Secretary Bob Nanva - a member of the now disbanded rail advisory group member - said new construction technologies could bring down the cost of the project even further.

"The RTBU has a long history of advocating for high-speed passenger rail to connect our major cities," Bob said.

"It would be a national tragedy if this project is lost for a generation simply because the cost estimates were overstated.

"Nevertheless, it is also important to make sure that safety issues are kept front and centre in the planning process, because the last thing we want is a cut-price project that fails to meet appropriate safety standards."

Former Transport Minister Anthony Albanese has already flagged that high-speed rail will be part of the Labor platform at the next Federal election.

R U on-board for R U OK Day?

The TrackSAFE Foundation is coordinating the first-ever R U OK Day for the rail industry.

To be held on 16 April 2015, R U OK Day will help address the stigma around depression, anxiety and emotional trauma in the rail industry.

Our Union will be involved, and we will encouraging all members to check in on their friends and colleagues to make sure they're OK. We're also

encouraging all members to check if their employer is participating in the program.



So ask the boss – R U on board for R U OK Day? And remember, no is not an acceptable answer!

For more information about Rail R U OK Day go to <http://tracksafefoundation.com.au/rail-ruok-day>

International labour leaders disappointed by G20 Agenda

International labour leaders met in Brisbane to take part in the G20 Summit to represent the “working voice” of the participating countries.

The Labour 20, more commonly referred to as the L20, engaged in discussions, which took place over two days and included a wide ranging agenda from climate action to women’s participation in the workforce.

However, just as world leaders remain dismayed about the Abbott Government’s anti-climate change agenda of the G20 Summit, international labour leaders were also critical of the government’s lack of consultation with leaders of the L20.

L20 leaders lamented Tony Abbott’s “business-driven” agenda to growth and economic productivity. Despite the Prime Minister meeting with various members of the business community, he refused to meet with some of the world’s most influential labour leaders.

Organised by the International Trade Union Confederation and the Trade Union Advisory Council of the OECD, the L20 Summit had hoped to contribute to the debate on economic productivity and the role that employment and workplace inequality plays in economic growth.

General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, Sharan Burrow, addressed a press

conference on Sunday expressing that a country could not address growth without first addressing inequality and wages.

The Labour 20 said the two per cent extra economic growth target heralded as the major outcome of the Summit would struggle to be met because it had not been accompanied by a plan to stimulate demand through higher wages and quality job creation.

Labour leaders are hoping for more positive inclusion in next year’s G20 Summit in Turkey.



AROUND THE GROUNDS

VIC

Vic Labor Puts Public Transport First

The Victorian election has been hailed as a victory for public transport, with voters backing in Labor's plan to put public transport first.

New Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has pledged to abandon the former Napthine Government's signature East-West road project, and put make the proposed Melbourne Metro rail tunnel the number one infrastructure priority.

Labor has also pledged to remove 50 level crossings across the rail network, to buy 30 new trains for the metropolitan passenger rail network and 20 new V/Locity carriages for the V/Line network.

Victorian Branch Secretary Luba Grigorovitch said the Victorian community was demanding better public transport.

"Public transport is no longer a niche issue that can be ignored. State Governments that talk a big game but fail to deliver on public transport will be held to account - as Denis Napthine as his colleagues found out."



NSW

NSW Govt's FART Train Fails the Sniff Test

The RTBU has called for a public review of the NSW Government's decision to install driverless or FART (Fully Automated Rapid Transit) trains to operate on the North West Rail Link.

NSW Branch Secretary Alex Classsens said commuters would be alarmed to learn of the plan to make them catch a train without a competent person at the helm.

"The travelling public need to have confidence that their trains are being driven by highly experienced drivers who can react quickly to any emergency situation.

"These drivers can see what is coming up ahead and ensure dangerous situations are averted.

"Adding to the danger of these trains is that they won't have any guards or station staff either. This is a recipe for disaster."

AROUND THE GROUNDS continued..

TAS

RTBU Launches Investigation Into TasRail Spending

The RTBU has commenced an investigation of TasRail's expenditure on costly external consultants.

Tasmanian Branch Secretary Sam Simonetis said TasRail has already been exposed in The Examiner newspaper for paying a senior executive \$2,000 a day in consulting fees over a 12-month period.

"When these details became public, TasRail responded by hiring yet another consultant to conduct a witch-hunt of employees to find out who leaked the information," Sam said.

The RTBU has demanded that TasRail provide full details of its expenditure on consultants under Freedom of Information laws. Stay tuned to Transport NOW for updates.



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