



# TRANSPORT NOW

## ACTU CONGRESS EDITION

The ACTU Congress was held in Melbourne during May 26-28, with around 800 delegates from affiliated unions meeting to discuss the union movement's agenda for the next three years.

The RTBU was successful in getting a number of critical topics recognised by the Congress. Some of the highlights of the Congress were:

- A policy from the RTBU to amend the Fair Work Act to stop employers from terminating Enterprise Agreements – particularly while new agreements are being negotiated;
- Support for the RTBU's campaign for Truth in Bargaining laws to make employers disclose the true state of their finances during enterprise negotiations;
- Recognition of the importance of investment in rail and public transport for social inclusion and the environment;
- Support for a national campaign for Domestic Violence Leave; and
- A plan to turn the ACTU into a permanent campaigning organisation to build a stronger national union movement.

The RTBU delegation was front-and-centre at the Congress, with RTBU members speaking on a number of important issues, such as the Aurizon dispute, domestic violence leave, work and family balance and the privatisation of public services.



### Union Movement Joins Forces on Aurizon

The shock termination of 12 agreements by rail giant Aurizon has been condemned by the ACTU Congress, which was held in Melbourne at the end of May.

Congress endorsed a proposal to lobby for changes to the Fair Work Act that will prevent companies like Aurizon from terminating agreements in the future.

Speaking to the Congress RTBU Assistant National Secretary Allan Barden said the Fair Work Commission decision to allow Aurizon to terminate the agreements stinks.

Allan told Congress delegates that the dispute had profound implications for the future of collective bargaining, and for the future of the union movement.

"If we fail to respond to this challenge then we will go down in history as the generation that stood by and watched as Australia's tradition of collectivism bled to death," he said.



## Push for Truth in Bargaining Gains Momentum

The RTBU's push for Truth in Bargaining legislation is gathering momentum, with the ACTU Congress endorsing the proposal as ACTU policy.

RTBU National Secretary Bob Nanya said Truth in Bargaining was all about forcing employers to be honest about the state of their books when negotiating workplace agreements.

"It's incredibly frustrating when cynical companies like Aurizon cry poor during enterprise negotiations, but then talk up their profitability to shareholders.

"Unions have joined together to force some honesty out of employers, and together we'll now be taking this proposal to the ALP National Conference in July."



RTBU National Secretary, Bob Nanya.

# Passionate Call for Domestic Violence Leave

The union movement is fighting to get a guaranteed right to domestic violence leave included in the award safety net so that victims of domestic violence can stay in their jobs and maintain critical financial independence.



Speaking passionately at the ACTU Congress RTBU Victorian Branch Secretary Luba Grigorovitch said access to domestic violence leave was critical in allowing women to escape a violent and abusive relationship without sacrificing a decent standard of living, adequate care for their children and appropriate housing.

"Violence against women is a serious problem with an average of two women every week being killed at the hands of their current or ex-partners. Domestic and family violence is also the major cause of homelessness for women and their children," Luba said.

"In addition to the devastating personal and physical costs, victims of domestic violence are often faced with the further challenge of juggling work commitments while they seek the medical, legal and financial assistance they need.

"Paid domestic violence leave recognises that workers experiencing domestic violence often have exhausted their personal leave entitlements and can least afford to take unpaid leave at a time when financial security is critical.

"Only around 17 per cent of Australians have access to domestic violence leave even though around two-thirds of the 400,000 Australians who experience domestic violence each year are employed.

"The ACTU Paid Domestic Violence Leave claim will directly benefit more than 6 million workers with up to 10 days paid domestic violence leave to attend court appearances, medical and legal appointments and make safety and re-location arrangements and should be supported by all employers."

## AROUND THE BUDGET

# ARTC up for sale

**Privatisations are again on the Federal Government Budget agenda, with Finance Minister Matthias Cormann announcing that a study announced will be conducted into the potential sale of the Australian Rail Transport Corporation.**

RTBU National Secretary Bob Nanva said privatising ARTC did not make economic sense.

"The Federal Government has spent over three billion upgrading the ARTC network, but it is unlikely to recoup this investment by flogging off the business," Bob said.

"Instead, it will be handing over a money-making enterprise to the private sector, and leaving the future of our freight rail network, and every industry that relies on access to rail transport - in the hands of a private company."

Bob said the freight rail network was a critical lifeline for regional communities around the country.

"We've known from experience in Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania that the privatisation of rail freight networks can be disastrous for regional communities.

"You simply cannot rely on a private operator to invest for the future and to support regional jobs.

"In fact, experience shows that the first thing private operators do is slash and burn to cut costs and sweat the asset.

"That will mean jobs being lost, and more freight being moved by road rather than rail.

"National Party MPs will be extremely nervous about this announcement and the likely backlash from rural and regional communities."

Bob said the planned inland rail project from Melbourne to Brisbane would be game changer for rail freight, and would bring enormous opportunities for ARTC - if it was done properly.

"Forecasters expect the amount of freight carried on the Australian transport network to double over the next 15 years.

"Instead of selling off vital rail assets, the Federal Government should be investing in a stronger, more efficient and more reliable rail freight network that can take a larger share of the national freight task.

"The Rail, Tram and Bus Union will be campaigning against the sale of ARTC, and fighting to save jobs in regional and rural Australia."

## Here are some of the other key features of the Federal Budget at a glance:

### Childcare

A simplified, single childcare subsidy which will come into effect from July 2017 is the centrepiece of a \$4.4 billion families package, which includes \$3.2 billion in new childcare funding. It will be means and activities tested, so that families earning \$65,000 or less will receive a subsidy of 85% of their childcare fees, tapering to 50% for families with earning \$165,000 a year, and capped at \$10,000 per child for families earning more than \$180,000. The government is spending an extra \$327.7 million to establish a 'childcare safety net' for disadvantaged, vulnerable and special needs children. It is also spending \$250 million on a trial of home-based nannies, which will begin in January next year. The government says this will help shift workers.



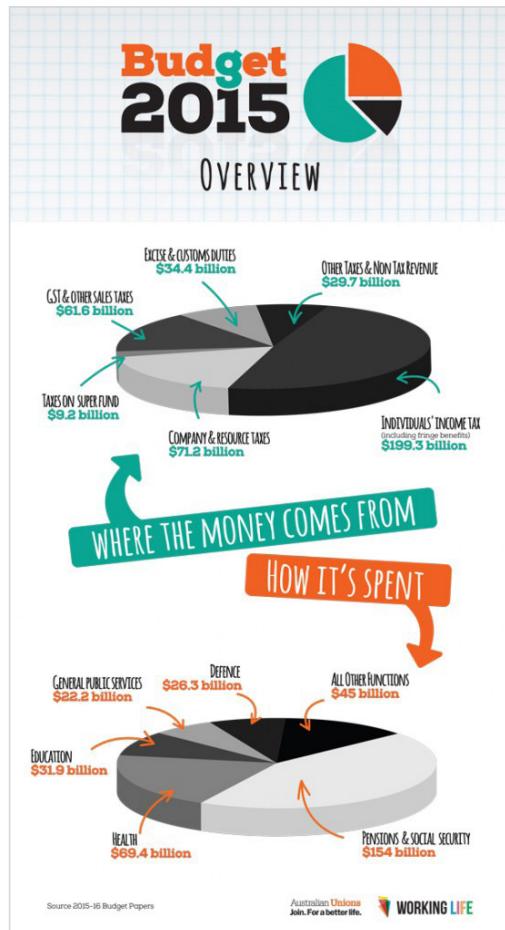
## More key features of the Federal Budget at a glance:

### Paid Parental Leave

One of the most controversial changes in the 2015-16 Budget is the scaling back of the paid parental leave scheme introduced by the Labor Government in 2010, which guaranteed new parents 18 weeks pay at the minimum wage, in addition to what their employer already provided. But from next July, access to the government PPL scheme will be reduced or even cut completely if an employer also provides a payment. The government calls this 'double dipping' and expects to save \$967.7 million over four years from the change.

### Healthcare

After \$57 billion was slashed from the public health system last year, a further \$2 billion has been cut from health and aged care in this year's Budget, in disease prevention and chronic care areas including child dental benefits, mental and preventative health drug and alcohol programs and child health assessments. The unpopular \$7 GP visit co-payment has been officially dumped, while from next January, parents who refuse to have their children vaccinated, except for credible medical reasons, will lose access to childcare payments and Family Tax Benefit Part A, which will save \$508.3 million, while \$252.2 million will be saved from price changes for some medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.



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### Schools

The Budget confirms that the Abbott Government will not honour the final two years of the Gonski agreements on schools funding to the states. Two-thirds of extra funding was due to be delivered in the years five and six of Gonski, and by failing to honour the agreements beyond 2016-17 and cutting indexation of schools funding beyond that, the Abbott Government will cut approximately \$3.8 billion from schools in 2019 and 2020. For public schools alone this is the equivalent of cutting 20,000 educators from schools, according to the Australian Education Union. There was also no new funding to support students with a disability in schools.

### Workplace

Extra resources will be pumped into the Office of the Fair Work Building Inspectorate, which had its coercive powers extended by the Senate on Monday, with its budget more than doubling to \$35.2 million, and staff growing to 155. But funds will be cut from the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, while the Fair Work Ombudsman will lose 25 staff, taking total numbers down to 685.

For more information see [workinglife.org.au/2015/05/12/how-the-budget-will-affect-you-2/](http://workinglife.org.au/2015/05/12/how-the-budget-will-affect-you-2/)