



TRANSPORT

NOW

Abbott & Pyne told to pull their heads in

National Secretary Bob Nanva has slammed the behaviour of Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne, and questioned whether they have broken the law by politicising the Trade Union Royal Commission.

“By appointing themselves as defacto “counsels assisting”, Christopher Pyne and Tony Abbott are undermining the legitimacy of the Trade Union Royal Commission,” Bob said.

“The Commissioner is entitled to ask whether they have breached the Royal Commissions Act 1902, under which it is a criminal offence to use “speech which is any manner guilty of any intentional contempt of a Royal Commission”.

“At the very least, Pyne and Abbott have tested the spirit and intent of the Act by using the Royal Commission for their own cynical political purposes in Parliament and in the media.

“Judicial and inquisitorial bodies, like Royal Commissions, not only have to strive to be independent, they must be perceived as independent.”

Bob said the Trade Union Royal Commission was set up by the Prime Minister rather than the Parliament, without the moral authority of a bi-partisan mandate like that of the Child Sexual Abuse Royal Commission.

“This should make the Trade Union Royal Commission even more protective of its independence and more determined to stay above the political cut and thrust.



“In the hotbed of our current political climate, and slippery slope of entering into the political arena and next federal election - Commissioner Heydon must therefore be very concerned about perceptions being created by the ongoing political interference from Canberra.

“ It is about time that the Commission sent a strong message to all politicians to pull their heads in so it can do its job. ”

See the RTBU Facebook page for Bob’s opinion piece in the Australian financial review, and the related news item from AAP – go to www.facebook.com/RTBUAus

Taking Asbestos Concerns to Canberra



The lives of Australian workers and members of the community are being placed at risk by exposure to imported products containing asbestos.

Unions – including the RTBU – and asbestos support groups met with Government and Opposition MPs in Canberra recently to call for bi-partisan support for more resources and better enforcement of Australia’s ban on asbestos imports.

Despite being banned, asbestos has recently been found in car parts, boilers, construction materials, trains, tugboats and children’s toys imported into Australia.

Many products are making their way to Australia via internet sites, such as eBay, from Russia and China where there is no ban on asbestos.

National Secretary Bob Nanva says the Federal Government is neglecting the asbestos threat, and as a result lives are being put at risk.

“We constantly see Government Ministers posing with military officials and bragging about how they are keeping refugees out of the country, but they are completely missing the boat when it comes to keeping asbestos out of the country,” Bob says.

“Asbestos is a killer, and our new Border Force agency needs to get focussed on protecting Australians from this deadly substance.”

Unions and asbestos support groups are calling for tougher enforcement of Australia’s ban on asbestos including:

- an investigation into incidences of asbestos importation into Australia;
- tougher laws to ensure people and businesses breaching the importation ban are prosecuted;
- more money and staff for Australian Customs and Border Protection Service to crackdown on illegal asbestos imports;
- the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Peter Dutton, to make stopping the importation of products containing asbestos a priority for Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

Regional Rail Link leads the way

Victoria's Regional Rail Link is officially open, and industry leaders are already hailing it as a success.

The project will add 54,000 passenger seats per day to Victoria's train system, reduce commuting time for hundreds of thousands of travellers and save Victoria \$300 million a year by reducing traffic congestion.

Federal Shadow Transport Minister Anthony Albanese says the Regional Rail Link is a perfect example of why the Federal Government should be investing in public transport infrastructure.

The recently completed Infrastructure Australia national infrastructure audit warned that traffic congestion was costing Australia \$13 billion a year and that this figure would rise to \$53 billion a year by 2031," Anthony says.

"This problem is holding back economic growth and creating the tragic situation whereby many Australians spend more time in their cars travelling to and from work than they spend with their children."



Read more in Albo's opinion piece in The Guardian <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/22/theres-more-to-transport-than-roads-what-does-this-government-have-against-trains>

Brookfield Bids for Pacific National

Canadian infrastructure giant Brookfield has made an audacious bid to buy a controlling stake in Asciano - the parent company of Pacific National.

Brookfield already has a major footprint in Australia, having taken over the construction firm Multiplex in 2007.

The company also has a long-term lease over 5,600 km of rail infrastructure in southern Western Australia.

Assistant National Secretary Allan Barden says it's too early to make

any judgments about the take-over bid, but the RTBU will be closely monitoring developments.

"It's always a anxious time when the ownership of a company is in limbo, but at this stage it continues to be business as usual at PN," Allan said.

In the meantime, National Office is alarmed by redundancies in PN's Bulk Division and further job losses related to PN's loss of the Bemax contract.

PN has also announced that it is proceeding with plans to consolidate its planning, rostering and live run functions into a single National Operations Centre, to be based in North Sydney.

"This will mean that up to 100 positions may be made redundant across the country - including operations sites such as Parramatta, Adelaide, Newcastle, Port Kembla and Mackay," Allan said

"Pacific National is still working through the details, however there will be opportunities for some staff to be relocated to Sydney.

"While we're very disappointed that PN is going this path, we will continue fighting to make sure every possible avenue for staff redeployment is examined. We will also ensure that ensure members are kept fully informed through the restructuring process."

AROUND THE GROUNDS



Strike action on SA trams & trains

Tram and passenger train drivers in South Australia have taken separate strike action after failing to reach agreement over pay and conditions with the SA Government. Of particular concern for members is the Government's position to remove job security provisions.

SA/NT Branch Secretary Darren Phillips says the SA Rail Commissioner is playing hard ball around deductions of pay for partial work bans, and this is the first time it has used these provisions of the Fair Work Act.

"Trammies and train drivers are disappointed that EA negotiations have stalled, but are determined to get a fair and reasonable outcome," Darren says.

"The strike actions were taken because members felt that negotiations for both tram drivers

and passenger train drivers were going backwards, and we needed to send a clear message to the Government.

"We just want to make sure that the Government gets back to the table and addresses the concerns of our members."

The dispute comes as SA members in the rail freight industry are also facing tough times, with job losses stemming from the downturn in iron ore exports.

MTM workers to vote on protected action

RTBU members covered by the Metro Trains Melbourne Operations EA will vote on a protected action ballot later this month, after negotiations over a new enterprise agreement broke down.

Victorian Branch Secretary Luba Grigorovitch says possible protected action could include "anything from bans on reporting late trains, stop work meetings, through to free ticket days."

Brookie Band Strikes the Right Note!

Brought together by their shared love of live music, a number of RTBU members at the Brookvale Depot in Sydney have formed their own eight piece band and will play their first official gig together next month.

Lead Singer Sarah Taranaki, who performs regularly with band 'Kotahi Groove', says she knew of a number of colleagues who shared her enthusiasm and passion for music. "It was inevitable we would soon form our own depot band and then the 'Brookie Band' was born," Sarah says.

The band will be playing a one-hour set from 7.30pm at the work social night on Friday 31 July at Brookvale Hotel on Sydney's northern beaches.

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