

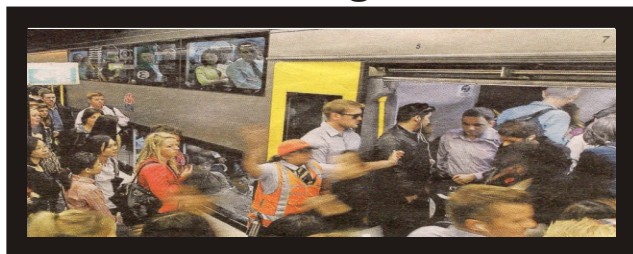
No. 171

Sept. - Oct. 2022

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**We told you so! Playing to lose cuddling Claassens's legalistic, half hearted, lame duck & chasing the mirage of NIF rennos! Strike while the iron is still hot with grass roots committees to win the 'real demands!' Not in holidays 'bosses' down time' with Elliott's looming 'radical action' rail lockout to impose DOO, Privatisation & Wage Cuts!**



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**Outrageous! Union Exec. Wants 30% pa pay rise for Claassens! P.16**

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

### **A Way Forward for the Rail EBA Campaign to Win the 'Real Demands!'**

Some of the most important news in the NSW Railways is the long drawn out half hearted, set up to fail EBA campaign which we warned about in the last Sparks. Currently it's buried in the Courts providing another excuse for a 'truce' and delay in the still favourable for industrial action period in the lead up to Xmas. (Stop Press: 9/9/22 An RTBU letter talks about resuming the lame duck campaign.) Claassens has diverted attention from major wage cuts resulting from the way below inflation (currently 6.1%) EBA demand for so called 3.5% pa pay rises and other likely fine print nasties with the chase after the mirage of rennos on the NIF (New Interurban Fleet) to maintain the guard's role in safeworking. DOO (Driver Only Operation) is an important prerequisite for the neo-liberal agenda of rail privatisation to cut costs for private operators. All the political establishment of Libs, ALP & Greens agree on this agenda. Check their record. While Claassens is associated with the ALP and signed off on the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) early 2017 over riding EBA 2014 okaying DOO on the NIF. (See article page 3.) Its urgent to establish grass roots committees to takeover the running of the campaign to achieve the 'real demands' in the favourable period for industrial action. Avoiding walking into a possible ambush by Elliott with his 'radical action lockout' in the holiday period 'bosses' down time' to impose DOO and as an election stunt. These committees could organise sending delegations to the grass roots in the buses and other parts of the NSW public sector to link up and take joint action to smash the NSW Public Sector Wages cap and help tackle a lockout.

An important victory won by the grass roots in the railways assisted by Sparks which has affected the entire NSW Public Sector is the reinstatement of those workers suspended over not vaxing. (See article page 8.)

In the buses in NSW an even worse bogus 'two tier' EBA campaign is being pursued by the TWU and RTBU officials with fake 2.5% pa pay rises and real wage cuts due to spiralling inflation, looming loss of the Home & Duty Opal and little for the Upper Tier. In this edition we expose the role of the RTBU officials in encouraging disunity in this campaign and their role in facilitating the privatisation of the Eastern Suburbs depots through sabotaging anti-privatisation industrial action. Its vital to establish grass roots committees at the bus depots to wage a joint NSW public sector campaign to defeat the NSW Public Sector Wages Cap and a rail lockout which would have adverse consequences in the buses. (See article page 17.)

**Sparks welcomes contributions by transport workers. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web site [www.sparksworld.org](http://www.sparksworld.org) Subs. are \$5 pa. Please make out money orders to Rebel Worker. Sparks is published by the Sydney Local of the Network for Democratic Unionism.**

**SPARKS WEB SITE [www.sparksworld.org](http://www.sparksworld.org)**

## N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

### **Where does our struggle begin? - Not our Summit – Not our Courts!**

***By Crimson Coconut***

The “right to strike” is not one of the concessions that was won at the recent Jobs Summit of talks between Unions, Business representatives and Government. A workers Right to Strike is missing, yet it is still a basic human rights issue in Australia, it’s an essential tactic that workers need to be able to force employers into providing decent wages and conditions. Without the ultimate right to strike workers have no real bargaining power.

At the “Jobs Summit”, the A.C.T.U. (Australian Council of Trade Unions) concentrated on the needs of the economy (Capitalism) by providing an agreement on the flow of migrant workers into Australia and a Government training scheme somewhere down the track. Skilled migrants will provide businesses with a ready trained overseas workforce on the cheap without having to spend money on doing the training themselves. Not that we are against migrants or migration. We just don’t want to see them or our own workforce exploited in order to simply make profits for employers by driving down wages.

Why would the unions want to strike a deal with the various heads of business such as Alan Joyce (Qantas CEO), The Business Council of Australia, etc. who have been hellbent on cutting the wages and conditions of workers and outsourcing most of their workforce to the lowest bidder? The old adage of “If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas” applies here. Is it simply that the union hierarchy wanted a seat at the feeding trough?

Industry wide bargaining, which the A.C.T.U. has argued, will simplify the business of making agreements, coincidentally which the business lobby also agrees on, might strengthen and give more power to the bureaucratic layer in the trade union movement but it does not empower those on the shop floor. There will be greater resort to deals between the union bureaucrats and employers like there was in the

past, rather than agreements in individual workplaces. This also might mean a more legalistic approach to bargaining involving union lawyers and employers lawyers. Transparency, openness and workers struggle will be gone or made harder in some individual workplaces due to the dis-empowerment.

Yet the A.C.T.U. argues that industry wide bargaining can deliver better wage outcomes since individual workplaces don’t have the power to put pressure on employers. However I would argue that if individual workplaces were supported across the board good agreements could be struck and the individual workplaces would retain their autonomy and local knowledge. Of course autonomy is the last thing the A.C.T.U. wants.

The Union Movement has long argued for a “fee for service” model, where, if you are a union member you pay your fees and the union bureaucrats supposedly do their best for you. Recently they proposed that non-union members should not get pay rises negotiated on workers behalf by unions unless they join the union in question or pay a fee.

Charging a fee and/or making it compulsory goes against the whole idea of union solidarity. People should be free to join or not a union. What say do workers have when the money they pay into the union coffers is used for funding a Labor Party campaign that they may or may not agree with? Consequently the “fee for service model” will do nothing to raise the level of class consciousness, solidarity, diversity of opinion or the struggle of rank and file workers. The ranks will be cut out of the decision making process and get what they pay for instead. Hardly a recipe for winning a workplace struggle. What about those that are also excluded from unions because of their political views? We know of people that have been denied membership simply for being critical of the union leadership over tactics. Where does that leave them?

Unions have an obligation to all of our Class, not just to Members. What about community campaigns by Unions? Yes, unions have an obligation to the Community, however most people would believe that the Community should not be paying for any support given. Take the example of the industrial campaign by the rail unions promising to ensure the safety of the traveling public over the introduction of new overseas made trains. While I agree this is a just cause it does nothing to put

money into the pockets of members. For that reason I think the issue of the EBA negotiations with NSW Trains should have been separated out from those of the safety issues. Safety though should be a core interest of unions and workplaces. Maybe it is not part of the current Enterprise Agreement, but the Government and the media surely is making it appear that



way. Is the Enterprise Agreement contingent on solving the safety problems with the new imported trains? Just maybe this situation is convenient for all parties involved in negotiations as the EBA renewal is well overdue causing delays to pay rises and ensuring that train guards still have their jobs for now.

Media such as the Daily Telegraph have made false claims about the log of claims within the Rail EBA by stating exaggerated pay rates for rail workers and taking many of the claims, such as R.U.O.K. Leave, out of context. There is a huge media campaign against the rail unions and workers involved in negotiations while mass media slavishly supports the NSW Liberal Government's position. The aim of the media campaign is to turn the public, inconvenienced by sporadic and haphazard industrial action, against the unions and deliver a win for businesses and the NSW Government.

The wishy washy half hearted campaign such as whistle blowing by train drivers and staff, failing to clean trains, wearing union paraphernalia to work, and banning certain trains being put into service, etc have drawn on for many months. As industrial action has ramped up and commuters have been inconvenienced at times attempts by the media have been made to get the unions off side with the public. To their credit the unions have done well at diffusing the misinformation campaign and have kept a large section of the public on side.

As we said in a previous article, in the last issue of Sparks, when the Government manufactured a lockout by ordering the stoppage of trains earlier this year then publicly blamed the union for causing trains to stop, a tactic that they have tried multiple times, a window of chance for retaliatory action was available to union members. With this stupid stunt by the Government public opinion was firmly in the ball-court of the unions. At that time we suggested that an all out campaign was not only possible but necessary. The union leadership continued to take the softly-softly approach making them vulnerable to a backlash from public misunderstandings and impatience.

The continued "fxxking around" by the union leadership who failed in their task of building a workplace led campaign of stop work meetings, street marches and industry wide strikes hampered negotiation efforts. Going hard and early by "walking out" the whole of the rail workforce may have worked better at bringing the NSW Government to its knees and back to the bargaining table. The public may have also accepted industrial action at that time for a short while. Haemorrhaging businesses in NSW would have been at the necks of the NSW Government to settle the disputes. Alas the rail unions preferred a drip fed industrial action campaign where a majority of workers remained at work and any actions became a minor irritation to the public and to the government. There were even public apologies by union officials explaining that they were not on strike and that members are ready and willing to serve the public. It became a silly cat and mouse game between unions and the NSW Government. The opportunity for full blown industrial action that the public would accept has probably passed.

NSW Unions also had a very good chance to build public campaigns with other public sector workers such as teachers and nurses who had similar bargaining problems. There are common ground issues such as the ending of the State Government Wage Cap that could have been a rallying point. There must be real reasons why Unions NSW and even the unions themselves never enacted a statewide public sector industrial campaign. The anger is still there across the board of state entities but nothing is being planned on a statewide scale.

As Sparks goes to print the rail unions are in the Fair Work Commission arguing against attempts of the NSW Government to cancel progress made on the latest EBA. I have always argued that the best and most effective form of action is action in

which the whole of the decision making and action involves all of the workforce. Workers standing up for themselves is the most powerful and effective action. Having a legal team that argues the union/workers case in the bosses courts removes workers from the political and active process of industrial advocacy on behalf of themselves. Also, involving a majority of a workforce in a militant industrial campaign strengthens the unions hand in the industrial courts as well as strengthening the union. Having a poorly organised and top heavy industrial campaign appears as a sign of weakness and lack of workers solidarity to the adjudicators at the bosses courts. Workers solidarity and organisation is what the bosses and courts fear most.

So the question is again what do we need to do? Of course in all calculations the Unions subservience to the ALP is a huge obstacle. It is also the main reason why the Unions are reluctant to give workers their heads by encouraging them to form democratic workplace bargaining and solidarity units that feed into the union as a whole. Understanding the limits of action because of the union's ALP connections and the reasons for certain actions is essential

While it may be difficult to have input into the bargaining and dispute process individuals should still work together, both in their own workplaces and within the union itself. Encourage others by being bold, bringing issues of union democracy before the union leadership. Join with like minded people from other sections applying pressure when necessary in the fight for a say, keeping in mind that other union member's opinions are just as valuable as your own.

The looming union elections in October are a chance for us to vote for people that will extend democracy within the union. Seek candidates out and vote for them according to how much credence they give to listening and giving others a voice. Workers can't complain if things stay the same by continually voting for incumbents who promise more of the same.

The bureaucratic nature of the trade union movement and their desire for self preservation and prestige at all costs along with the "pay for service" model which they advocate, are all a massive hindrance against lifting the living standards of workers across all sectors. The "New Accord" (Job Summit) designed to appease businesses and keep the ALP in power will solve none of the problems that working

people face with the "cost of living crisis". By acting together and building solidarity in our favour we can be content that we at least tried and we won't be ignored, ever.

## LETTERS

### RAIL-BUS MARSHALS RACKET In TfNSW

Dear Sparks

I was recently seeking employment as a Rail-Bus marshal. I rang 'Prospect Employment' a body hire employment outfit. It is supposed to recruit bus marshals for private bus companies for replacement rail bus services due to track work. They wouldn't get back to me after I left messages on their phone (its not a land line with receptionist just a mobile - seems suspicious) seeking a bus marshal job. Also the Transport for NSW recruitment web site - when getting into the recruitment section - there is no mention of "bus marshal jobs!" I have approached various people who I have seen doing the bus marshal job on the Bankstown line re bus rail replacement bus services. I have been constantly told they got the jobs through friends or relatives. Seems dubious/corrupt employment practices by Transport for NSW. I understand the union hierarchy has let this happen for many years and they don't care.

Concerned Reader

**COMMENT: Also we wonder if the 'customer experience Marshals' are being reinvented for The Bankstown line? They were EOI positions but at a much higher rate than a CSA & all they did was bus marshaling. When no buses, help people with the opal machine, places of interest blah blah blah.**

**Anyway the team leader bus marshals were on equivalent to an SDM3 money, wtf?, for what?**

### STAND DOWNS & REINSTATEMENTS OF NON-VAXED IN SYDNEY TRAINS

Dear Sparks

It's been a long 6 months will be 7 by first of July since we have been stood down by Sydney Trains management due to refusing to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

However we still will need risk assessments to gain a return to our jobs.

Management breached the EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) clause 33.5. We should have been on the master roster till a determination

We were threatened with dismissal 4 times.

We did nothing wrong but stuck together in solidarity to fight a policy change that was wrong by trying to force vaccination on employees.

Yet the vaccinations didn't stop people from catching COVID-19 or transmitting COVID or dying.

The RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) failed to help workers until a grass roots activist in Sydney Trains put in a dispute grievance under the dispute settlement procedures



using the RTBU EBA document.

This action caused the RTBU officials to become embarrassed and so they went to the Fair Work Australia Commission to contest the suspension and likely sacking of workers who refused COVID-19 vaccinations.

Not once did the RTBU officials acknowledge us! No pay for 6 months for those stood down! We have been treated like animals!

**STOP PRESS:** Latest news is that management is renegeing on the reinstatements.  
Angry Sydney Trains Reader & Supporter

Dear Sparks

Briefly: I am a Sydney Trains worker. My application for exemption last December was based on legal and moral grounds and other issues. After that was rejected in January I was paid out all my annual leave, then put on leave without pay for the next four or so months.

I quit the RTBU after months of no response to contact over this issue and the usual abuse from its reception staff when trying to get help. Running out of rent money my partner and I moved to a country town where we had been lucky enough to buy a house last year before things went so bad.

The RTBU eventually piggybacked on the Fair Work Tribunal case of two other trade unions which had gone in early to stand up for their members... it was June before they decided to join the case, and I believe that was only on the strength of one of the members lodging an individual dispute without their assistance. They did a verbal deal with the railways that members would be given the same support the other 2 unions got, namely back pay and to be put back on master roster. But members who had quit were required to pay them back all the interim fees before they would be included. This notwithstanding that membership rules permit suspension of fees in the case of hardship... Moreover, the union didn't actually notify former members that this was going on: it was only through a Telegram group that people found out about the deal and that they could be helped. Then of course they had to confront again the terrifying Cerberus who answers the telephone in order to rejoin and be put on the list.

Now, after a nominal consultation, the DoT has indicated its intention to lift the vaccination mandate and allow the rebels to return to work on September 1. (Various other government departments in NSW have preceded it.) On that day we shall no longer apparently be the deadly threat we have been for the past nine months. (Two weeks earlier suspended teachers suddenly became safe.) As of August 21 there has been no official confirmation of this revocation. Employees are uncertain whether the policy will actually be removed and when, if at all, they will be reinstated in their positions. **STOP PRESS:** As of 1/9/22 mandate against non-vaxed workers lifted in Sydney Trains by CEO Sydney Trains.

It's tricky having to arrange rental accommodation five hours from where one is living on the strength of a rumour. It's tricky in a market where prices have risen and

availability has diminished. It's really tricky for those who are living in friends' sheds with no money left.

I really want to preach but I suspect those who haven't seen for themselves the important issues in play here won't learn a thing from my doing so. I hope the editor has some wise thoughts to contribute. I have found Sparks valuable, informative and very very real in my time on the railway.

Sydney Trains Reader & Supporter

## FAIR GAME?

After two plus years of COVID insanity where democracy and human rights were trashed by power hungry unethical and inept politicians and medical bureaucrats with not only the full support but indeed the urging of the union bureaucracy there can only be one story - the average person/worker/union member needs to know that all this was done purely as an exercise in coercive control. How can any union support a policy that seeks to discriminate and deprive workers/members from their human right to work ???.

People/workers being shamed, intimidated, bullied threatened with being deprived of their livelihoods and in many cases being deprived of their livelihoods, many driven to suicide (and this is now being normalised).

Had this lunacy been allowed to go on (and it still might if we do nothing) they, the useful idiots and order followers in politics, bureaucracy and union so-called leadership would have deprived people of even their basic freedoms, their access to food and set up GULAG's and concentration camps (some already built in QLD). Workers were given termination letters that said they were being terminated for "their own safety" - Orwellian double speak and twisted logic that can only come from useful idiots and order followers.

It was all based on lies - the fake videos from China of people dropping dead in the street, the fake bat story, there's no evidence it came from a lab, it's only for 14 days to flatten the curve, mask can protect you and others, LGA's of concern, lock downs will stop the spread, one shot to get our freedom back. Then two shots, then three and four, etc. Then no it won't stop you from contracting and spreading it but the symptoms will be less severe and you won't end up in hospital. All lies.

And of course, the Teacher's Federation hysterical push to close schools and sack teachers who don't agree to having their right to informed consent and human rights generally violated. Insisting that even children be violated with an experimental drug.

Now they just can't understand why there's a worker shortage - it's no mystery they sacked them!

And of course, the "mysterious" appearance of the adult sudden death syndrome - all this science and suddenly they can't figure out the cause of death! No mystery

there either it's the adverse effects of the experimental shots that they try to play down and hide.

We knew two years ago that ScoMo was running an illegal so called "national cabinet" whereby he effectively took power away from elected representatives in the federal parliament and gave it to state premiers who then used illegal mandates based on state law to override both the commonwealth constitution and federal legislation as well as the international covenant on civil and political rights. All this gave illegal mandates the colour of law and allowed the judiciary to pretend that the constitution and federal legislation did not apply. It also allowed the anti-discrimination bureaucrats to claim they could not intervene since their mandate was only to investigate breaches of Commonwealth legislation. So called "safe work" and "fair work" played similar semantics. The police forces played their part too by using unlawful violence intimidation and exorbitant fines to scare the population into acquiescence and submission. All with the full knowledge of the Labor party and the senior union bureaucracy.

We now know that ScoMo was preparing to go full dystopian dictatorship by secretly appointing himself into several ministries (virtually identical to how an Adolf gained absolute power in a different "fake emergency"), again with the full knowledge of the Governor General who of course was a party to it all because he too is just an overpaid useful idiot and order follower. And of course, Labor had to have known because the State Premiers formed the illegal and secretive "national cabinet" and most of them were/are from the Labor party.

And what are they doing now apart from begrudgingly admitting that they got it wrong and pretending "that their heart was in the right place" as the "illustrious" Victorian CHO Brett Sutton puts it. They are also importing cheap labour in the form of poorly trained nurses and doctors, etc, raising interest rates as a cover for the economic destruction caused by lock downs, which were planned to disguise a financial crash that would help them usher in "the great reset" - the fourth industrial revolution. See Klaus Schwab, WEF.

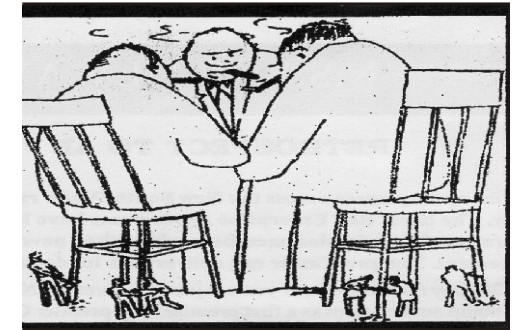
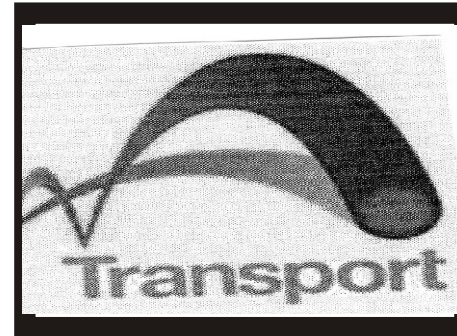
That's the only story that is important and every person/worker should know and take seriously the danger of corrupt unethical useful idiots and order followers that masquerade as their politician, bureaucratic experts and union leaders.

**By Railway Johnny**

**TAS PT HISTORY Cont. From Page 28** to Hobart are discontinued with operations centred around Brighton. As of 2022 the track has not been lifted on this section and locals in the line plus the Greens want a light rail constructed to Bridgewater.

As of 2022 the MIT is still a Government owned bus operation, but since 1993 it has been known as METROBUS Pty Ltd 100% owned by the Government. As for Green Coach Lines this was closed down in 1969. The Legislative Council in Tasmania would not pass the appropriation bill to buy new buses. This organisation is the most reactionary Upper House in Australia. One day a book maybe written on the history

of Green Coach Lines. Country bus operations are provided by private operators. As this article has been prepared a Canadian Firm named KINETIC has acquired AYRES COACHES. In conclusion this is a summary of public transport in Tasmania. Further information will be in a future issue of Sparks.



## Scenes from a Marriage

Warning: Political Satire

**A new Bromantic Union Bureaucratic Comedy Directed and Produced by Unions NSW, ALP Godfathers, Deep State Agencies, the Corporate Media and the ALP aligned Real Estate Fraternity at ALP Studios in Sussex St. Sydney.**

At 11am sharp on Sunday 11/12/22 the nuptials cum merger ceremony of the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) and the TWU (Transport Workers Union) to form the new 'Teamsters Union' (Australian Franchise) were held at UNIONS NSW offices in Sussex Street Sydney. Mark Morey UNIONS NSW Secretary had graciously agreed to act as 'marriage celebrant' and provide the venue. Alex Claassens NSW RTBU Secretary was looking magnificent. He was attired for the occasion in a flowing wedding outfit with train embroidered with the RTBU logo in pearls, carried with reverence by ALP loyalists amongst the loco reps acting as brides maids and flower boys. Touchingly wedding bells chimes followed not so surprisingly by the music themes from the movies 'The Godfather Parts I & II' were piped on the office muzak system. It had all been funded by the union executive members with a levy imposed on their wages with a view of 'room at the top'. It was certainly not seen as a 'bribe'. His stand-in as 'father of the bride' to give Alex tearfully 'away' was David Babineau NSW RTBU Bus & Tram Division Secretary. Richard Olsen TWU NSW Secretary as bride groom was in blues brothers mode with a \$5,000 black suit emblazoned in gold with the TWU logo on the back of his suit coat. His best man was Albo, ALP Godfather in Chief. However following the couple's nuptials and taking of vows to serve their corporate masters

and ALP Godfathers faithfully until death do us part, the assorted union reps and the union executive members from both the TWU and RTBU displayed a strange aversion to the traditional 'kissing of the bride' practice. Why? Matthew Longland CEO of Sydney Trains, Pete Allaway of NSW TrainLink, Clint Feuerherdt CEO of Transit Systems-Sealink and the USA Labor Attache rushed up and presented bouquets to the newly hitched couple. Then in stark contrast



Wedding Snap

to the other guests, smothered the 'bride' in big sloppy kisses.

On the pavement outside UNIONS NSW offices, as the happy couple were leaving for the reception at the newly opened ACTU subsidiary 'Executives Retreat and Intimate Companions' operated by Queen Sally McManus of the ACTU executive, the NSW Electoral Commissioner John Schmidt, together with assorted members of the RTBU & TWU union executives and reps showered the happy beaming couple ecstatic with vistas of their new bureaucratic life together with confetti. As an economy measure it was composed of shredded 'unwanted at the official count' ballot papers to conjure the illusion of an always low voter turnout and rig the RTBU 2014 and 2018 elections.

### JOINT AFP, ASIO & FEDERAL ICAC RAID!!!

Suddenly there was uproar and mayhem, with the sound of police sirens and red lights flashing. Racing AFP (Australian Federal Police) cars swerved, careening into the screaming wedding crowd. AFP officers wearing body armour charged from their cars with guns drawn led by Peter Hall Commissioner of the new look 'loose canon and law unto itself' Federal ICAC. AFP cops wildly pepper sprayed ALP henchmen amongst the RTBU and TWU union reps desperately trying to prevent confiscation of the unusual and compromising 'confetti'. Soon the blinded union reps were put in head locks by the AFP cops and even ASIO spooks wearing fake beards and wigs which kept falling off and dark glasses which had suddenly burst out from the crowd. They had been keeping the 'wedding' under close surveillance. The union reps were then spread eagled on the pavement before a gawking and horrified audience with the AFP cops and spooks then trying out new fangled and often fatal choke holds, they had learnt from the U.S. Cops. The 'confetti' was seized by the AFP to be taken to their HQ for 'forensic' examination.

Peter Hall leader of the AFP and ASIO pack known as 'Strike Force Big Fella' confronted the shocked and outraged 'love birds' Alex and Ricky and their 'parson' Mark Morey from Unions NSW. He gave them the low down. The raid was part of investigation by the Federal ICAC into grave allegations of RTBU/TWU elections ballot rigging involving the AEC going back decades and a massive web of corruption involving the union officials and ALP Godfathers. Hall foamed to Alex, how shocked and dumb founded he was by the allegations. He had thought Alex "always obeyed the law of the land" and was "squeaky clean". Certainly not a bomb throwing 'industrial terrorist' as portrayed by Transport Minister Elliott at the time of the Feb. 2022 Sydney rail lockout. He thought Alex was meek and mild. More a tame 'industrial pussy cat' as shown with the half hearted, drawn out rail EBA industrial campaign. Many of his illusions in Alex were dashed! He threatened darkly to have RTBU Division Accounts 'forensically' audited, going back many decades!!! In particular the Bus Division 'Bus Drivers Traffic Fine and Xmas Fund'. He was also curious about the mysterious fate of the 'strike funds' money of the unions which merged to form the RTBU. He had been reading copies of a certain 'underground paper' that gets around and had been roused into action by its revelations! Alex and Ricky's jaws dropped. The raid and threats cast dark clouds over their plans for a happy bureaucratic life together and launch pad for ALP parliamentary seats. Hall then confronted a trembling Schmidt from the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) warning him darkly that the next targets for raids by his storm troopers were all AEC offices as part of nation wide 'dragnet'. His raiders would be seizing all computers from their offices and CCTV footage for again 'forensic' analysis and auditing. Regarding secret files on how members vote at elections and EBA ballots linked to those mysterious codes on the face of AEC ballot envelopes. He was seeking evidence of ballot rigging and those associated top secret elections and EBA ballot counts and meetings with the union bosses before the 'official count'.

He warned Schmidt that there would be no 'kid gloves' treatment with his AEC staff like occurred with the union reps today. They would be hauled off into the bowels of AFP HQ to their new \$100 million state of the art, retro sensory deprivation Spanish Holy Inquisition/Guantanamo Bay style dungeon. His staff would be manacled 24 hours a day, have electric shocks applied and water boarded.

It was all perfectly legal now with recently passed Federal Anti-Terrorising of union members legislation. He and the Strike Force would be just "obeying the law of the land!" Hall foamed telling him how determined he was to crack the code of silence imposed on Schmidt's staff about the ballot rigging by the ALP Godfathers. He would force them to spill the beans whatever it took!!! He wouldn't tolerate any "I know nothing" Sergeant Schultz style nonsense like heard from Transport Minister Elliott at the time of the Sydney Rail lockout. Schmidt was in a state of shock, dramatically clutching his chest, appearing about to have a heart attack!!



## MEDIA PACK DESCENDS!!!

The day suddenly became worse for the newly hitched 'love birds' when News cruisers screeched before them and a host of reporters and camera crews suddenly swarmed around them. Hall had tipped off the media about the raid! Hall updated the media on its purpose. He reveled in the media attention before the TV cameras and photo snaps for the print media, portraying himself and Federal ICAC as heroic union boss and ALP corruption fighters. Then he and the 'Strike Force' AFP cops and ASIO spooks with their piles of 'booty' roared away from the scene. Following a flurry of "no comments" the love birds and their guests battling off the swarming journos and reporters, were whisked to the reception venue on the TWU's brand new fleet of CIA engineered armour plated black Cadillacs donated by their sister Teamsters Union in the USA, the AFL-CIO-CIA and the Deep State. They had been hotly pursued by news cruisers and the media pack, but lost them in side streets. Later that day TV, radio and the on-line media were full of stories of the raid to uncover massive rorts involving the union bosses, ALP Godfathers and the AEC. In next day's print media towering blood curdling headlines with stories about the massive rorts investigation and dramatic details of the raid appeared.

### **The Bromance: A Tale of Simulated Hate, Love, Desire & Lust for Union Real Estate Assets with the Back Drop of the Corporate Privatisation Conspiracy Spiders' Web**

After the arrival of the bridal party and guests at the venue and following the wedding banquet feeding frenzy, Claassens and Olsen strode touchingly, hand in hand to the rostrum and gave nostalgic speeches. Consisting of anecdotes from their 'bureaucratic bromance' over the years which eventually led to today's 'tying the knot'.

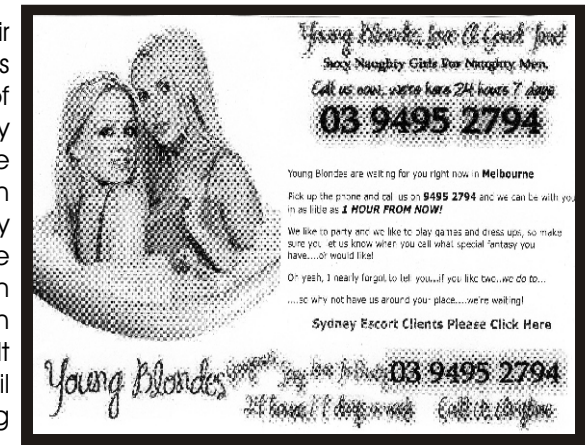
Babineau from the Bus Division chimed in with anecdotes about some silly quarrels over the years between the two union bureaucracies such as the RTBU rep at Waverley bus depot inciting RTBU members to attack TWU flyers which were later patched up. Such shenanigans of course handily played a useful role in diverting grass roots attention away from fighting privatisation and associated attacks on wages and conditions. Meanwhile a constructive 'working relationship' had been established between the Alex and Richard such as the stymieing of industrial action to oppose the privatisation of Newcastle STA bus depots and the orchestration of a fake lightning strike following the then NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance announcement to privatise Region 6 in 2017 and sabotage of industrial action in the Eastern Suburbs depots in mid 2017 over privatisation. Currently there is the TWU/RTBU bogus 'two tier' EBA campaign in the buses in NSW resulting in a fake wage rise and real wage cuts with spiralling inflation and Super increases.

Claassens and Olsen thrilled their audience of bosses and polties with their role in the spiders web of conspiracy being woven by Transport Minister Elliott and the Perrotett NSW Govt. for a big push to impose DOO (Driver Only Operation) and then open the flood gates to the privatisation carve-up of the NSW railways with the NIF (New Interstate Fleet). It would highlight a new Sydney rail lockout in January 2023 during

business down time.

### **30% pa Pay Rise for Secretary Claassens!**

The union executive members all rose from their seats and demanded at least a 'modest' 30% pa pay rise with compensation for Super increases and 'no trade off's' for the 'bride' Claassens for his sterling efforts in helping RTBU members urgently required for 'health reasons' belt tightening with his 'smoke and mirrors' performance of deliberately drawn out half hearted rail EBA campaign, so called 'negotiations' and fake pay rises with real wage cuts on offer. Associated with Claassens reverence for the NSW Public Sector wages cap. They also noted another corporate leader, the Commonwealth Bank CEO recently granted himself a 35% pa pay rise. They praised Claassens's crafty ploy with the aid of the Corporate Media of diverting grass roots attention away from the pay rise to the DOO (Driver Only Operation) issue on the NIF (New Interurban Train Fleet). However one executive member angrily objected to having to further chip in for the bride's well deserved pay rise, as they were already meeting the cost of a key part of Alex's exquisite bridal 'twinsel' and other wedding expenses. He was assured by Farren Campbell Loco Division Secretary that if he and other members ran into financial dire straits such as not meeting their rent and mortgage commitments, he heard on the grape vine that Alex would generously help out. Alex would allow him and others from the executive to pitch tents or even move in caravans in the backyard amongst the marble fountains and statuary of former ALP Godfathers such as Neville Wran, John Ducker, Bob Hawke and Gough Whitlam of his new mansion in the exclusive Sydney suburb of Point Piper. However there would be a 'Catch 22'. He knew the exec. members couldn't possibly object to helping out Alex on their days off with pushing the wheel barrow on major renovation work, mowing the extensive lawns and weeding the many flower beds in the palatial gardens and of course acting as waiters and chauffeurs for Alex's receptions and banquets for ALP luminaries such as Albo, Chris Minns NSW ALP Leader and Queen Sally





McManus of the ACTU.

At the conclusion of the speeches, the crowd of union and corporate bosses, polities and ALP loyalists trooped into the VIP room with its enormous en suite spa for a Roman style orgy. It was to be orchestrated by Mistress of Ceremonies Sally McManus and assisted by the 'choice' Melbourne based 'Young Blondes' management consultants patronised by the cream of the 'Corporate' union hierarchy such as the former now unfortunately disgraced head of the HSU(Health Services Union), Craig Thomson. They were bankrolled thoughtfully by members of the ALP 'real estate' fraternity with an eye for mouth watering union property sell off rorts following the unions merger. Boxes of top quality grapes for the festivities were generously supplied as a wedding gift and a way of 'patching things up' with Alex by Transport Minister Elliott. Rich helpings of 'gravy' for the Wedding lunch courtesy of the Telegraph Editor and NSW Employee Relations Minister Damien Tudehope! Additionally 'Pork Barrels' rolled in from the head of NSW ICAC!

## Sydney Buses News

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

**Sparks: What has been the impact of the takeover by TransDev at Waverley as part of privatisation of the Eastern Suburbs depots?**

Waverley Driver: Regarding the privatisation - we are being screwed down so hard there is very little more that can be drawn/milked out of the workforce. The Govt. ensured this before it handed over the management to private operators.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the industrial action initiated by the union officials of the RTBU in the Eastern Suburbs STA bus depots in solidarity with drivers of Region 6 opposing privatisation?**

Waverley Driver: In Mid 2017 the RTBU officials bureaucratically called a 24 hour 'No Opal Card and No Uniform' action in the Eastern Suburbs depots in support of Region 6, of RTBU members at Leichhardt, Burwood, Tempe and Kingsgrove depots facing privatisation. It was such a dreadful, poorly managed industrial action - the out of uniform, and No Opal machines fiasco.

Workers were alerted at the last moment. We were only informed by text and email late the night before the action. (In my case upon waking up that morning for work at perhaps 5 am!) There were no union depot meetings held before this action commenced. I noticed only 10 to 15% of drivers were visibly out of uniform at Waverley and adhering to the uniform bans(probably more for Opal machines). The drivers involved in the action subsequently faced victimisation by management, some only the letter and the union officials failed to support the targeted drivers. The pictures of some drivers involved in the action were taken at

the Bondi Junction interchange. On returning to the depot other drivers involved were photographed by depot administration personnel and subsequently fined. The pay docking was what I believe to be called an 'Industrial allowance' which I vaguely recall was \$100-\$150. I think closer to \$150. It was about \$3 less per hour for I'm guessing - maybe 6 months. Letters were sent out obliging a reply as to why we were not wearing a uniform, and recorded insubordination or E1 warning type record on their records for not operating the Opal machines and not wearing the uniform. Some only received a letter of warning. Other targeted drivers received a fine in the form of a fortnightly pay reduction for 6-12 months.

As a result the new private operator may have been effectively assisted by the RTBU officials in fitting up for the sack of militants at the depot later down the road. Cynics may consider the officials sabotaged the effectiveness of the industrial action. However everyone remembers what a failure and the negativity of the outcome. Other news is that the RTBU officials using the flimsy pretext that the Eastern Suburbs bus depots had only recently been privatised failed to call industrial action by union members to take joint action with Region 6 RTBU and TWU drivers over the 'Two Tier' wages and conditions campaign. Although clearly industrial action when the solidarity is so weak - is not smart!! Particularly given the result from 3 years prior.

### RTBU Officials' Incompetence or Conspiracy?

**Editorial Comment:** However a case could be argued based on the above evidence that the RTBU officials deliberately set up this action in 2017 to fail, and so demoralise drivers and undermine solidarity. Perhaps even a cynical manoeuvre by the officials in cahoots with the bosses and Liberal Govt. to head off any industrial action over the more recent bus routes cuts in the Eastern Suburbs in Dec. 2021, ahead of privatisation in early 2022 and the 'Two Tier' campaign.

Intriguingly when the Liberal Govt. drastically cut E.S. Runs and argued the Light Rail would replace these services the RTBU staged 4 public rallies to give a platform to ALP polities in the lead up to the State and Federal elections. Randwick drivers at the Randwick rally told Sparks the public were not told the deal had already been cut with the State Govt. to privatise. No attempt was made by the Union to mobilise the public and local Councils to back any industrial action. Just 'Vote ALP'. Post Federal elections the RTBU went quiet again and went back to focusing on the Rail issue where the Liberals were running amok.

The union officials displayed a similar seeming 'incompetence' in the organising of the so called 'lightning strike' in Region 6 following then Transport Minister Constance announcement to privatise Region 6 back in 2017. Again there were no depot union meetings and union reps advising drivers of the action. With many drivers only learning of the action via the corporate media or from passengers while out on their routes! There was also well organised strike breaking by the bosses with the aid of ex-STA drivers from the private bus companies who knew the routes and

conveniently a role for the Metro Buses crossing Region 6 assisting the strike breaking. These Metros were from STA depots outside Region 6 where the union hierarchy and union reps had not encouraged drivers to take more hard hitting solidarity action presumably with the flimsy pretext that privatisation wouldn't affect their depots! Later on the day of the strike a poorly attended protest rally organised by the union officials was held near NSW Parliament. No mass stop work union meeting for even Region 6 drivers was held to discuss the running of the campaign against privatisation. Ensuring ultra bureaucratic control by the RTBU union officials of the campaign and maintaining the isolation of Region 6 drivers.

According to information received by Sparks a RTBU Bus Division delegates meeting was held two weeks before the strike and voted for strike action across Sydney. However one week before the strike another RTBU bus delegates meeting was held attended by Mark Morey Secretary of Unions NSW. He convinced the delegates to only take strike action in Region 6. Grass roots union members were kept in the dark about the decisions of these meetings and the looming privatisation announcement. The RTBU officials are certain to have had much more advanced warning of the privatisation push in the buses and needless to say kept members in the dark. Given 'secret' weekly meetings between the NSW Transport Ministers and RTBU NSW State Secretary Claassens. The corporate media spread the dis-information that a delegates meeting was held at Leichhardt depot in the evening following the announcement to cover-up the conspiracy. Pointing to a spiders web of conspiracy involving a lot of back room meetings and long term planning involving the bosses, NSW Govt. and the union bosses of the RTBU and TWU. Highlighting the importance of establishing grass roots committees on the depot level to organise direct action independently of the officials. (See earlier issues on [www.sparksworld.org](http://www.sparksworld.org) on-line for the full story.)

### LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

#### Sparks: What are latest developments?

Leichhardt Driver1: We have still not heard the outcome of the new 'Two Tier' EBA campaign. Meanwhile there has been some positive developments. Following the new company Transit Systems/SeaLink taking over in 2018 as part of privatisation, the new bosses proceeded with savage attacks on us particularly the old time ex-STA drivers. Except four rosters, ex-STA drivers were being displaced from these better paid rosters and facing major wage cuts. Their positions on these rosters were given to the much lower paid new drivers, often TWU members. However recently the CEO of the new operator has directed management to place these ex-STA drivers back on their old rosters. Another expression of the cowboy approach of the new company management was their refusal to pay us the 2.5% pay rise associated with the old RTBU EBA which we were due 2 years ago despite us being

legally entitled to the rise. Now management has made another U-turn and decided to pay us the pay rise with back pay. **(Editorial Comment: The principle underlying the old award system and now EBA's is not defending or preserving conditions but avoiding industrial disruption. Even before enterprise bargaining with the Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Court and awards system, in certain sectors award conditions still needed to be enforced with industrial action.)** We continue to experience a shortage of drivers due to the low wages and other poor conditions of new drivers. An important example of the lack of enthusiasm for employment as a driver for Transit Systems was that no one bothered to attend the recent Leichhardt Depot Open Day.

#### Sparks: What are your impressions of the situation in Transit Systems?

Leichhardt Driver2: We have been very concerned about being kept in the dark by the union officials with the outcome of the new 'Two Tier' EBA campaign. Management is pursuing a new wave of attacks on us. In regard to the bendi shifts they now want to reduce the shift loading. Their longer term plan is to remove the bendi buses completely from the depot bus fleet. They want all our buses to be electric. Another prong of the management onslaught is their demand to remove our Home & Duty Opal card.

**STOP PRESS:** Region 6 bus drivers struck from 4am to 7am and then 2.30pm to 5.30pm on Wednesday 31/8/22 with up to 1100 drivers off duty for six hours over the TWU/RBTU 'Two Tier' EBA campaign. Neither the TWU nor the RTBU officials advertised the strike on their social media. Obviously too frightened to publicise joint action by rail and bus workers and the important precedent it sets for industrial campaigns. The officials took every measure to prevent any unified action by rail and bus workers, including those covered by the same union. Meanwhile the 'Two Tier' campaign offers nothing in regard to improving the conditions of those drivers on the upper tier. Only improving the conditions of those on the bottom tier further dividing workers. The so called pay rises being negotiated by the union bosses are way below the spiraling rate of inflation currently estimated at 6.1% pa (in reality much higher taking account of various food and other staple prices increases) and expected to grow even higher and will mean a major real wage cut for many! Meanwhile legislated Super contribution increases over the next 3 years will cut in the hand pay.

### Randwick Depot News

#### Sparks: What has been the impact of the privatisation of the Eastern Depots for the depot?

Randwick Driver: Since the major bus route bus cuts in early Dec. 2021, we have not seen major changes. However a major attack looming associated with privatisation is the removal of our Home & Duty Opal. It seems certain to go ahead

and will have a major effect for many of us. Some of us live nearby the depot and won't be affected much, however many drivers come from the Far West of Sydney and the Central Coast. They will be hard hit with the extra costs imposed on them, and won't be worth for them to continue on the job at the depot and will find bus driving work closer to their homes.

### **Sparks: What do you see as the impact of the upcoming NSW State elections in March next year?**

RD: One strong possibility is that the Perrottet Liberal Govt. will even introduce new bus routes and putting on more drivers. So as to garner more votes in the elections. Over the years there has been talk of closing the depot and selling off the real estate for high rise developments. However with the Liberals in dire electoral straits and likely to lose the elections, its likely the depot closure and land sell off will be put off the NSW Govt. agenda.

### **Pt. Botany Depot News**

### **Sparks: What has been the impact of privatisation at the depot?**

Pt. Botany Driver: The takeover of Region 9 and the Eastern Suburbs STA depots only occurred in April so we have not noticed any significant changes. The cuts to many routes occurred before privatisation in early Dec. 2021 Many drivers at the depot were angry over the cutbacks to shifts and major wage cuts associated with the bus routes cuts. However the union officials have been spreading talk in the media of the removal of the home and duty Opal by the new operator.

### **STOP PRESS: SYDNEY BUSES NEWS**

All tenders for the 8 year contracts for bus regions in Sydney are currently up for review. Its 'business in confidence' whether Busways is competing with other companies for their contracts as part of an expansion push in the industry. Meanwhile all Sydney bus companies are experiencing a shortage of drivers. An important factor contributing to the shortage is the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Newcastle Bus News**

### **EBA Campaign Strikes**

Newcastle bus drivers went on strike for four hours over a new EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) on June 3rd 2022 and for 24 hours on Monday 20th June.

At a RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) rally in Wickham Park on 3rd June drivers rejected the way below inflation pay rise offer of 10% over 4 years of their employer Keolis Downer (KD).

The RTBU officials have expressed willingness to accept a revised new EBA based

on a fake pay rise of 7% over two years which is also well below inflation which is currently 6.1% pa.

Newcastle bus drivers are already facing savage attacks by KD bosses. As its contract with Transport for NSW specifically allows the company bosses to cancel up to 120 runs a month without paying any penalties to drivers. However they are cancelling up to 90 runs a week. They just write 'COVID-19' as the reason so they don't get penalised.

## **VICTORIAN RAIL NEWS**

**In this issue of Sparks we will discuss current issues at V/Line. As in previous issues names have been changed.**

### **Sparks: What is the current situation in Bendigo?**

Harriet: Due to works on the line by V/Line and Melbourne Metro Tunnel works there have been lengthy closures of the line.

Ichabod: During these line closures trains are replaced by buses for the entire journey to Bendigo, or from Gisborne to Bendigo. As a result a number of bus drivers

are employed by the bus companies for the duration of the works.

Harriet: One of the bus drivers employed was the former manager at Bendigo.

Herbert: Since the settlement of the unfair dismissal case he has been doing some casual work. He was a popular manager with the local bus companies and one of the bus companies hired him as a bus driver for the duration of the line shut down.

Harriet: As soon as V/Line found out the former manager was driving



buses, V/Line informed the bus company that he was not allowed to drive buses on V/Line property.

Rastus and Roscoe: The manager has no convictions so V/Line cannot stop him from driving buses to Bendigo. You cannot have a conviction to drive a bus. It is also a restraint of trade. This action is depriving him of his livelihood. What does V/Line want?

Ichabod: They don't want him around V/Line. He will be the rallying issue to unite



V/Line employees.

Roscoe: V/Line does not own Bendigo Forecourt. It is owned by Victoria.

The same applies to Southern Cross station. Civic Nexus owns the Bus Terminal so the ex-Manager could still legally drive buses. Over the last fifteen years other former V/Line employees have driven buses during the shut downs. The TWU would become involved as they cover bus drivers.

Harriet: You can see why V/Line employees hate management.

**Sparks: Is V/Line still standing down employees?**

Ichabod: An employee received a please explain over an incident. His manager wasn't impressed and ran bleating to Human Resources. So the employee was stood down.

**Sparks: Couldn't the manager sort out the incident?**

Rastus: The manager is just a robot. If Human Resources tell him to jump. It would be how high.

Moose: We do not know the outcome of the case.

Forsyth: Another stand down has occurred in a regional location. An employee was stood down for five weeks. The employee was assaulted by a passenger and he defended himself.

**Sparks: Is this incident a repeat of an incident reported in issue 150?**

Forsyth: It is looking that way but what has come to our notice is the Regional Manager at this location has taken a dislike to this employee. V/Line employees are of the opinion that this manager wants him dismissed.

Rastus: We wonder if one of his mates was after a position at V/Line. His friend maybe in the V/Line Intent Pool.

Roscoe: The attempt to sack this employee BACK FIRED. The stood down employee had the support of the union, fellow employees and local townspeople so he was reinstated.

**Sparks: What is the position for employees who want to transfer to other depots by mutual swaps.**

Archie: No hope of a transfer.

Sheona: Years ago you were able to transfer to another depot if there was a vacancy at this depot. If you were declared redundant you could transfer to another depot where there was a vacancy under the Transfer and Resettlement scheme.

Moose: Employees could transfer to another depot but now you have to compete with an outside applicant.

Forsyth: As a result of this policy a number of employees wanting to transfer have been unsuccessful. The present position is some Melbourne based employees live in regional locations and work in Melbourne. For some it is a long drive to Melbourne if you work an early shift. You get free travel to work so for some shifts you can travel to work by public transport but it is still a long day.

Archie: With high fuel prices and the cost of housing in Melbourne a number of Melbourne employees who have applied for positions at Country locations have been unsuccessful due to outside applicants obtaining the position.

Ichabod: An employee is challenging Human Resources over the policy. The employee has been knocked back a number of times and I understand he is taking his case to Fair Work Australia. He may succeed with his application. We are hoping he succeeds.

**Sparks: What is the story of V/Line increasing the part time positions?**

Archie: In the conductors' grade full time employees who resigned, retired or promoted have been replaced by permanent part time employees.

Moose: This is an attempt by V/Line management to break the union. With these part time employees an employee was working a shift of eight hours for the week. A permanent part time employee is supposed to work a maximum of twenty hours a week. A breach of EBA agreements.

Forsyth: Originally there were part time employees in Melbourne but these positions lapsed. There are still part timers at Geelong, Kyneton and Bacchus Marsh and Warrnambool.

Ichabod: A number of Rest jobs have been eliminated in Melbourne. These have been replaced by permanent part time positions at Bairnsdale, Warrnambool and Albury.

Rastus: Part time employment should be used as a transition towards retirement not for replacement of full time employees.

Sheona: With these part time positions created V/Line can say to the Government they are creating extra jobs at Regional locations.

Moose: The union is fighting these changes.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. Part time positions and job share should be used as a transition to retirement. Employees should be allowed to transfer between depots with no obstacles.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say the treatment of the former manager at Bendigo is in one word SPITE. He should be allowed to work as a bus driver. He has no convictions and it is a restraint of trade. As for Human Resources, readers of SPARKS know what we drivers think of Human Resources BASTARDS.

**In the last issue of Sparks we discussed the use of sub standard rolling stock on V/Line Regional trains. Once again conductors, drivers and station staff will update readers on these issues. Once again names have been changed.**

**Sparks: What is the current situation at V/Line regarding the rolling stock?**

Midge: N sets up until the latest shut down, one still being replaced by H sets on Shepparton services.

Finbar: During the shut down over Max. to upgrade the Geelong Warrnambool line

N sets have reappeared on Shepparton trains. It has been rumoured that the union went to the Minister of Transport over the issue. Also regular passengers on the Warrnambool and Shepparton lines have complained to their local Members of Parliament.

Moose: Since the last issue of Sparks four Velocity sets which are numbered sets 93 to 96 have been delivered to operate Albury trains.

Forsyth: One of these new trains has been equipped with a buffet module. The other sets will be returned to ALSTOM to be equipped with buffet modules in the near future.

Rastus: Since December six car Velocity sets have operated the 12-05 Albury service on weekdays. The other services and the weekend trains are operated with N sets.

### **Sparks: What is the rumour that an N set has been placed in storage?**

Roscoe: A N set used for standard gauge services to Albury has been placed in storage at Seymour.

Forsyth: This set could have returned to broad gauge services using bogies from a broad gauge N set which then could be overhauled.

Rastus and Roscoe: Drivers and conductors are of the opinion that V/Line does not want to spend money on N sets. If the cost of the overhaul does not justify

keeping N sets then these sets will be stored then withdrawn. Due to Disability legislation V/Line hopes to withdraw some of these sets over the next three years.

Finbar: In the recent State Budget money has been appropriated for 12 new Velocity trains.

Moose: The Velocity sets operating the standard gauge services were fully overhauled in 2009 and 2010. They were at first operated broad gauge services

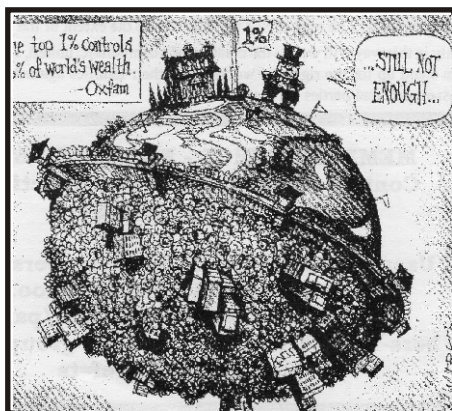
then placed on the standard gauge during 2011 and 2022. They still have a few more years of life left.

Rastus: With the 12 Velocity trains being delivered perhaps a few H sets could be withdrawn.

### **Sparks: What is the story of the operation of the H set in the Shepparton train on Good Friday?**

Forsyth: This was like an episode of Comedy Capers.

Archie: The H set was okay in the forward journey but in the return journey things went wrong.



Midge: The toilets failed so the train was stopped for a lengthy period at Seymour so passengers can use the toilet. Seymour was the only station where people could use the toilet. On leaving Seymour a young child wanted to use the toilet. We do not know what happened.

Rastus: During previous shut downs the drivers in the station pilots have noticed N sets in sidings at Spencer Street for the duration of the shut downs. The drivers have noticed that some of these sets have not been moved to the sheds. They have only been tested at the sidings.

Midge: Conductors have noticed this as well. Conductors have wondered if these sets have operated.

Forsyth: As we have said in previous editions of Sparks since 2004 the rolling stock at V/Line has nearly doubled. V/Line now has 96 Velocity sets, 21 Sprinters, 8 H sets and 16 N sets. Have the number of Maintenance workers increased?

Archie: We cannot answer these questions but in the opinion of conductors there should be a ratio of maintenance staff to service the carriages. In other words maintenance staff should be increased.

### **Sparks: What of service cancellations?**

Finbar: There have been a few cancellations. One of the reasons are COVID restrictions. This can happen at short notice if a driver, conductor or maintenance employee has to isolate at short notice.

Archie: Another reason is unavailability of rolling stock. Sometimes trains are cancelled at short notice and passengers are told to wait for the next train. This could be a wait of forty minutes or a wait of 1 ½ hours. This leads to Customer Service staff being abused.

Forsyth: Some trains run as reduced cars. For example 6 car velocity sets are reduced to 3 cars. 4 and 5 car N sets reduced to 3 cars. The only good news is Sprinter trains if they are 2 cars cannot be reduced to 1 car on V/Line as this is now forbidden.

Midge: Most times conductors are not told if the trains are reduced and they only find out when they arrive at the platform to run their trains. Conductors are abused by passengers and if we stood up for ourselves we end up facing Human Resources. We know how passengers feel that we are not punching bags. Years ago management backed us but now if there is a problem, management runs away.

### **Sparks: Once again space has overtaken us. V/Line should be renegotiate the maintenance agreement with the maintenance contractor to employ more staff.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say V/Line management should be ashamed of themselves for what happened with the H sets to Shepparton on Good Friday. So they have a conscience? The answer is no. As long as the train operates they are not fined.

## TASMANIAN P.T. HISTORY

**In this issue of Sparks we provide a History of Rail, Bus and Tram operations from 1938 to the present in Tasmania**

1938 : In 1938 the Public Transport in Tasmania was operated by the following organisations:

(a) Tasmanian Government Railways, Emu Bay Railway and the Mt. Lyell Railway ran rail services in Tasmania.

(b) Tramways in Hobart and Launceston were operated by local Government as HMT and LMT tramways. Both organisations also operated buses with Hobart also operating trolley buses.

Various private bus companies running services around the state.

In 1938 the Government set up the Transport Commission to control Government Transport in Tasmania, The Railways are placed under a General Manager. The Commission also operates Ferries both passenger and Vehicular across the Derwent river. The Commission also sets up a Bus Operation to operated intercity services plus outer suburb services. The bus operation is called Green Coach Lines.

1943: Pontoon Bridge is constructed across the Derwent River. Vehicular Ferries are withdrawn. Passenger Ferries continue to operate to Bellerive.

1950: Tasmanian Railways are in a run down state so a modernisation plan is implemented. New steam, diesel locomotives and rail cars are introduced. A rail service is introduced between Hobart, Launceston and Wynyard. This train is later replaced by a new passenger train called the Tasman Limited.

1951: Launceston Council introduces trolleybuses to replace train services. Last train operates in 1952 with some train services replaced by diesel buses.

1955: Due to high train and bus fares in Hobart the State Government in March 1955 sets up the Metropolitan Transport Trust to operate Tram, Bus and Trolleybus services in Hobart. In July 1955 the MTT acquires Launceston Metropolitan Tramways. In 1960 the MTT acquires private bus operations in Burnie. MIT announces trams will be replaced by buses. This is achieved in 1965. Fares are frozen for a few years.

At the same time consultants from the U.K. recommend all passenger services except Hobart suburban trains and the Tasman Limited be discontinued. Due to a outcry from rail unions a compromise is reached and not all trains are discontinued. The services left by 1958 are Tasman Limited, Services to Launceston, Fingal line and New Norfolk. The remainder are discontinued but goods trains with passenger accommodation are still operated.

The services are replaced by buses operated by the Transport Commission plus private buses on some lines. At the same time some outer suburban buses operated by Green Coach Lines are transferred to the MIT.

1963: Due to construction of an all weather highway passenger services in the

Emu Bay Railway are discontinued between Burnie and Rosebery. Zeehan beyond Rosebery was discontinued in 1960. A weekly mixed train continues. At the same time the Mt. Lyell Company closes rail operations. Efforts are made to keep the line for tourist services. This is rejected by the Tasmanian Government due to large losses. The line is completely rebuilt in 2008. The saga of the railway is another story to be told.

1964: Tasman Bridge replaces the Pontoon Bridge between Hobart and Bellerive. Transport Commission Ferries are discontinued. Ferries still operate by private operator.

1967: Due to a drought in 1966 the Hydro Electric Commission forces power cuts. Trolleybus services on weekends are replaced by Petrol Buses. Trolleybuses are discontinued in Launceston July 1968 and Hobart November 1968.

By 1970 there have been further cuts to both country and suburban services. By 1972 what is left are the Tasman Ltd, Railcar to Parrattah, Railcar to Launceston on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons and a reduced suburban service in Hobart. On the last day of 1974 Hobart suburban services were discontinued. They are replaced an enhanced MTT service. The only services left are Tasman Ltd and Railcar service to Parrattah on alternate Fridays. In 1975, 1976 and 1977 special trains are run for the Hobart Show at Elwick.

Due to the collapse of a span of the Tasman Bridge due to a collision with a Bulk Tanker, Hobart's suburban trains are re-introduced from Bridgewater. They only last a few days. The Government leases ferries from NSW and a ferry to Bellerive is re-introduced supplementing private ferry operators. This ferry discontinued in 1977 when the Tasman Bridge is re-opened. Private buses are operated but with reduced services.

1978: In March 1978 Australian National Railways takes over rail operations in Tasmania. ANR do not want to operate passenger trains. Tasman Ltd is cut to three times a week. In July 1978 all passenger trains in Tasmania are discontinued. ANR is freight only and rationalisation of the rail network continues. By 1990 the system is carrying bulk commodities. The mixed train operated by the Emu Bay Railway is discontinued in the 1980's.

1997: November of this year ANR is privatised. An organisation called TASRAIL owned by Tranz Rail and Wisconsin Central. In 1998 the Emu Bay Railway acquired by Tas Rail closures of lines continues and the USA owners of Wisconsin Central decide to get out of Australian operations. Pacific National acquires TASRAIL and by 2008 asks the Tasmanian Government for a subsidy to repair infra structure. Pacific National threatens to close down the whole operation. In 2010 the Government decides to take the railway back into Government Ownership. That is completed by 2013.

2014: New locomotives are acquired from the USA. This is the first new locomotives since 1974. At the same time freight services from Bridgewater **See Page 11**



