



QUEENSLAND BRANCH

# PN Coal Newsletter

AUTHORISED BY OWEN DOOGAN BRANCH SECRETARY

Level 1, 457 Upper Edward Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

Email: [info@rtbu.com.au](mailto:info@rtbu.com.au)

Phone: Public 3839 4988

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Dear Member

## PN Qld Coal Negotiations: PN Needs to Recognise Employees' Value

As PN Qld Coal negotiations enter a critical stage this week, It is not a surprise that the PN management team are not really wanting much change, if any, to the current Agreement.

Members must remember the current Agreement is for all intents and purposes, a boss's agreement written by bosses and agreed to by literally a handful of employees with no Union or industrial advice. We have been advised that not one amendment was made by the few workers who agreed this "Workchoices" Agreement.

It is quite understandable that an employer, who made a conscious decision to use the John Howard "Workchoices" legislation to circumvent the Union in order to create a non union Agreement, would design it to assist, first and foremost, in maximising the returns to the shareholders.

Therefore industry standards for Traincrew were not of any particular importance to the creators of this Agreement.

The last Agreement was introduced before the commercial operation commenced and this is the first time PN Qld Coal workers have had an opportunity to have a negotiated outcome that reflects the needs of the workers. PN Qld Coal already has an Agreement they designed to reflect what they perceived to be their needs.

From the outset, your representative has emphasised that this Agreement should be about providing fair and just minimum standards quite rightly expected by employees covered by this Agreement.

Naturally it is in all our interests for the company to be successful, but it is now time for PN Qld Coal to share more equitably with their employees the returns received.

You will no doubt here the company suggesting that only benefits you should receive in this Agreement are those you pay for through sacrifices you are prepared to accept from the negotiations. This would mean that changes which provide you with an improved quality of work life would most likely not be available through negotiations. Bargaining in good faith does not restrict you from seeking and expecting recognition from the employer for the benefits they are currently enjoying as a result of your labour as well as you gaining improvements in your quality of work life.

PN Coal this week invited the company accountant along to cost the log of claim and, not surprisingly, it appears the Company has costed your claims on a worst case scenario.

Many of the costs suggested in this exercise could be avoided if the company simply followed the very fair terms that are being proposed.

There has been some agreement in principle on very minor items, but, simply put, PN Coal feel that if there any changes they must be cost neutral, a very unrealistic approach when you consider the history of the original Greenfield boss's Agreement.

Your negotiating team has been strongly arguing for fair and reasonable minimum conditions so the life of a PN Coal train driver is more predictable, has clear definitions on hours of work and hours of leisure and fair remuneration.

Whilst PN Coal is considering most of the ideas put forward, any concessions are being proposed to be put in **Policy rather than your EA**. The difference being policy can be changed at the Company's whim, Agreements are law and can only be changed by 50% plus 1 voting for it.

Some of the biggest issues from this week are:

- The **All Up Rate** (aggregate) that is enjoyed by just about every rail company in Australia.
- The formulation of Depot Roster committees elected by Traincrew to represent the interests of Traincrew in every depot.
- Minimum conditions for Barracks.
- Definitions of what is a DOO and what makes up a TDO configuration.
- Locking the longevity payment into the EA (so it cannot be turned off at the whim of the company).

Just to name a few.

The company position is that their contracts are only increased by CPI then the agreement only can be increased in CPI, anything else must be cost neutral, a totally unreasonable position given that all of the depot representatives have clearly indicated the dissatisfaction of the current EA and the issues it causes in the workplace.

Your Union will continue to bargain in good faith with PN Coal and will continue to try to convince the company, which posted record profits last year, that it is time to share a small amount of that profit with its workers, in the form of guaranteed safe working conditions that are fair and will help retain Traincrew in this highly competitive environment.

If you require further information please contact one of the negotiating team or myself.

**Unity is Strength**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Mackie', written in a cursive style.

Bruce Mackie  
**QLD State President**