



# National Office Bulletin

## RTBU Members' Newsletter 8/2005

### AWAs and November National Day of Action

This edition of *your* RTBU National Office Bulletin:

- *AWAs and their impact on Rail, Tram and Bus employment*
- *Diary note for the National Day of Action: 15 November 2005*

#### AWAs in the Transport Industry

The federal government is currently conducting an inquiry into workplace agreements. Specifically the Inquiry seeks views on the 'new industrial relations regime' – *before complete details of the new regime are actually known!*

Regardless, the RTBU put forward a submission detailing members' experiences with Australian Workplace Agreements so far.

In rail, tram and bus industry, despite attempts by some employers, the RTBU has been successful in maintaining collective bargaining.

AWAs have only been used in a small number of rail, tram and bus workplaces. But where they have been used, the outcome for these workers has been no different to that of AWA workers in other industries – lower wages and conditions compared to those covered by collective agreements!

One of the most stark examples arose out of the sale of the federal government owned Australian National. Employees of AN were told that if they wanted a job with the new companies, Serco or Tasrail, they had to sign an AWA.

At Serco, these AWAs for on-board services employees contained wages that were 40% lower than at AN. Further, the AWAs at Serco did not include a wage increase for the full three year term of the agreement.

Despite attempts since 1997 by the RTBU to negotiate a collective agreement at Serco, including intervention by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, Serco has refused. Consequently, Serco employees remain on AWAs which provide conditions much lower than the industry standard.

A more positive AWA story is found at Tasrail where collective pressure has resulted in a certified agreement being negotiated by the RTBU containing conditions which reflect most of the rail industry standard.

While AWAs have not been a feature of many other workplaces in our industry, they are prevalent in the private bus sector – for example at Connex in NSW – where again, the wages and conditions are much lower than the wages and conditions our members have gained through collective bargaining.

The government's push for AWAs is likely to strengthen with their majority in the Senate. *Union members need to take a strong stand against AWAs, and require their employer to negotiate collectively.*

*United We Stand, Divided We Fall.*

#### National Community Day of Protest and Sky Channel hook-up

A National Community Day of Protest against the Howard governments proposed IR legislation is planned for November 15, 2005.

The National Community Day of Protest will inform union and community members about the legislative changes, protest the attack on workers' rights, and provide information to union members about what they can do to make their voices heard even after the legislation has been passed.

As part of the protest, there will be a national meeting via a Sky Channel hook-up to which all members are invited.

The hook-up will likely be the largest union meeting ever assembled in Australia.

Information on locations & times for the hook-up will be in future National Office Bulletins.