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eBULLETIN OF THE RTBU NSW LOCOMOTIVE DIVISION DELEGATE

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Pacific National Bails Out of Grain

Optalert Trials Re-Start

Pacific National have indicated that they wish to re-commence trials of Optalert. At this stage the trial is intended to run for two (2) weeks only and will be conducted by our nominated participants. The object of this trial is to validate the "algorithm", on which the entire operation of the system is based. Previous trials have showed that their existing algorithm to be unsuitable for use in the rail industry.

Testing Times

Relations between Pacific National Northern Coal and its employees continues to be tested with ongoing issues and perceived breaches of its *Employees Responsibilities Code & the Equity at Work policy*.

It would appear that an environment of distrust is rapidly developing where it is perceived that if you make an error of judgement then management will throw the book at you.

It would appear that morale is at an all-time low. Productivity is their concern, not loyalty nor good morale.

In order to address this situation and restore an environment of trust it has been agreed that a series of bi monthly meetings be held with local managers and union representatives.

Future of Grain Freight in Doubt

The Pacific National Grain Division drought management plan is to abandon the area and to cut staff numbers. It appears the company takes on certain operations with no responsibility or long-term commitment to the industry, local communities or their workers. They seek subsidies from the government, or long-term contracts with commitment to run, to continue or threaten to pull out.

Pacific National has announced its withdrawal from NSW export grain with the cut back in staff throughout its operations within NSW & Victoria. There are 400 workers in the business, 60 who have already taken redundancy, with approximately 100 more jobs to be cut, and others to be redeployed to other areas of the business. Pacific National are currently finalising the expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy and redeployment options from members in Cootamundra, Junee, Temora, Parkes, Dubbo, Narrabri and Werris Creek and also the depots in Victoria. In NSW the depots are downsizing and keeping just enough staff to service current contracts within the domestic market.

The RTBU has been meeting with industry representatives and government, to attempt to flesh out a sensible and sustainable option for bulk grain and rail freight services in NSW. A number of options have been proposed to retain infrastructure and regional jobs. The RTBU has pressed for the establishment of a working party to investigate ways of securing the future of regional freight lines and grain haulage, as well as discussions between State and Federal governments to commit funds and develop a regional land transport policy.

OH&S Corner

Members are reminded of the importance of ensuring that they wear all of the required P.P.E. at all times. Recently there was an instance at a mine loading point where a second person alighted from the locomotive to reset points. He neglected to wear his safety vest during this movement. Unfortunately (or fortunately) for all concerned there happened to be several representatives of I.T.T.S.R. present to conduct re-certification for that particular location. Needless to say the Regulator wasn't happy and a full investigation was initiated. So be wary-you just don't know who may be around. None of us can afford to clock off on safety.

RailCorp News

RailCorps' arrogance knows no bounds with its attempts to enforce its decisions onto its workers. Issues such as the Consolidation of the Award and EBA's, Consolidation of Rostering Conditions, changes to Driver Trainers Position Descriptions and attempts at coercing Driver Trainers to provide SRT training to their peers are heading to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission because RailCorp believes it has a right to determine these issues their way and only their way.

RailCorp management have not yet realised that under a Rudd Federal Government there is a change in industrial relations that discourage this type of management behaviour.

Team Leader Classifications

Further meetings have occurred with RailCorp management in an endeavour to resolve with differences between the RTBU and Management. At these meetings RailCorp has only further inflamed the situation by stating that these positions will only be filled by an expression of interest rather than the position being a separate grade. Further management has stated that the position will not have a pay rate but it will only be paid as an allowance.

This puts into question issues such as Appeal rights and the differences between a rate of pay and an allowance. Management has even stated that when an employee is performing Team Leader duties that they would not be working to the EBA and Award but to an "Arrangement" which encompasses "entitlements."

The RTBU will be taking this issue to the Industrial Relations Commission.

PPP Project Update

The crew cab committee have attended meetings to review the proposed new TOS [now called ITIS] system & view the partial "mock up" of a carriage. The ITIS system developed to date has shown improvements in ease of operation, screen navigation & relevance of information displayed.

The PPP Guard relocation project will meet on the 10th of this month to review the findings of a report on infrastructure changes required for this trains operation. Once again, as in the development of some new procedures, drivers were not invited to participate.

Railcorp 2008 EA

It is disappointing that RailCorp still refuse to have decision makers at the negotiation table at the weekly (1 hour) meetings.

On a positive note, the information briefings that have been held over a 2 week period for members across a range of depots/workplaces has been very well received with members of the negotiating team providing rank & file members the correct information on the current state of negotiations with RailCorp.

These meetings were well attended across all areas & positive feedback was gained for the campaign ahead.

Extending Intercity Boundaries to Bondi Junction.

Once again RailCorp has attempted to force Wollongong and Eveleigh drivers to learn the roads from Central ESR to Bondi and return. The RTBU has continually challenged RailCorp's position of managerial prerogative which they wield like a club on its employees. They are using that phase to try to implement this working.

This issue on the extension of boundaries went before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission who stated that the parties would be waiting on a decision from another case involving Station Managers and Duty Managers, on the principle of what constitutes "Conditions of Employment". This decision will be made by the Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and will have ramifications across a wide range of issues and disputes.

New kid on the track

We welcome a new operator to the NSW network in the form of a company called EL Zorro (*Spanish for the FOX*) they have been operating within Victoria for 8 years and have established themselves as a reputable operator in the industry with a long term vision of growing the Rail Business. We are currently negotiating a National Agreement with the company that will allow them to operate anywhere in Australia. Some of our members have already been employed on the conditions of the existing Victorian agreement and we look forward to a long and mutually successful future with this company.

Authorised by Alex Claassens, Divisional Secretary

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