

May 2019

# Common Cause.



**GIVE A  
WORKER**

**A GO: MEET THE COAL  
MINERS' CANDIDATE**

**RUSSELL ROBERTSON**



# GIVE A WORKER A GO: MEET THE COAL MINERS' CANDIDATE



**"I REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN MY DAD WORKED AT GOONYELLA MINE, EVERYONE HAD A PERMANENT JOB WITH FAIR PAY AND CONDITIONS."**

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**RUSSELL ROBERTSON IS A PROUD CENTRAL QUEENSLAND COAL MINER AND CFMEU MEMBER. NOW HE'S RUNNING FOR FEDERAL PARLIAMENT, FIGHTING FOR A COAL INDUSTRY THAT DELIVERS FOR WORKERS.**

Russell is a third generation coal miner who was born in Clermont and raised his own family in Moranbah, where he has worked at Goonyella mine for 17 years.

He is urging voters in the crucial marginal seat of Capricornia to ignore the Nationals' fake coal scare campaign and decide what sort of coal industry they want – one that looks after workers or just the multinational mine owners.

Russell, along with other Central Queensland Labor candidates Zac Beers in Flynn and Belinda Hassan in Dawson, has signed the CFMEU candidates' pledge for coal mining and energy workers.

The pledge commits them to supporting coal jobs and projects, same job same pay for labour hire workers and the right for casual workers to convert to permanent jobs. Casual labour hire has grown out of control across the industry with



Zac Beers

National MPs representing these key coal mining seats in Canberra.

Russell has experienced it firsthand. *"I remember what it was like when my dad worked at Goonyella mine, everyone had a permanent job with fair pay and conditions."*

**"IT'S NOT LIKE THAT TODAY, RICH MULTINATIONAL MINE OWNERS ARE INCREASINGLY HIRING CASUALS AND LABOUR HIRE WORKERS INSTEAD OF PERMANENT EMPLOYEES. THESE WORKERS GET NO HOLIDAYS, NO SICK LEAVE AND STRUGGLE TO GET A MORTGAGE. WORSE STILL IF THEY SPEAK UP ABOUT SAFETY, THEY GET THE SACK."**

Russell is committed to stamping out dodgy labour hire in coal mining and across the community.

CFMEU Mining and Energy Queensland President Stephen Smyth said Russell would be a great voice for mineworkers in Canberra.

*"The National MPs representing this region are suddenly pretending to be coal miners' best friends. But we should judge them on their record, not their empty promises."*

*"They have overseen mass casualisation of our industry, turning thousands of good permanent jobs into long-term casual jobs with no leave, no job security, no future. "Because of them, central Queensland is the mining bosses' labour hire heaven."*

*"I am proud to support Russell's campaign. If you live in Capricornia, or know someone who does, I encourage you to give Russell your support. We need a CFMEU coal miner in Canberra."*

## Beating the FIFO blues



### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA HAS BECOME THE FIRST STATE TO DEVELOP AN INDUSTRY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES FOR FIFO WORKERS. IT IS A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT, BUT WILL COMPANIES STUMP UP FOR REAL CHANGE?**

Steve Holder loves his job as a BHP iron ore train driver in the Pilbara, so much that he's been flying across to the Pilbara from regional NSW every fortnight for 11 years.

What he hates is turning up to the same Port Hedland camp each fortnight, staying in a completely different room each time and being subjected to a raft rules and regulations that make it difficult to rest, relax and socialise.

**“I LOVE MY JOB, I LOVE DRIVING TRAINS, BUT IT’S SO DEPRESSING TO COME UP TO THIS CAMP TO KNOW THAT YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS ANY MORE, YOU HAVE TO ABIDE BY ALL THESE RULES AND PROCEDURES, AND LIVE OUT OF A BAG.”**

Western Australia has become the first state to develop an industry code of practice for mentally healthy workplaces for FIFO mining and construction workers. It is a great development that is rightly being hailed as an important step forward for FIFO workers.

But workers are worried that mining companies won't make the necessary investment to reduce alarming levels of psychological distress among FIFO workers.

A study undertaken to inform the new code found that FIFO workers suffer from severe psychological distress at three times the rate of average Australians. About one in three FIFO workers suffer from high to very high levels of psychological distress.

One of the key findings of the research and a key recommendation of the code is that workers are able to

stay in the same room each swing in a 'home away from home', rather than the common practice of 'motelling' where workers are continually moved around.

*“Those with permanent rooms report better mental health and wellbeing outcomes than other accommodation arrangements, eg motelling,” the code says.*

Steve and his fellow train drivers have been pushing BHP for years to provide them with permanent rooms at the Port Haven Camp. Like many FIFO workers, Steve spends more time at camp than he does at home with his family. He'd like to hang pictures of his family on the wall and store belongings, rather than have to pack up all his belongings and go to a new room each time.



Compounding the challenges for train drivers is their staggered roster which means they don't work the standard 0600 to 1800 shift that camp life is organised around for meals and recreation.

BHP says no to permanent rooms, even though the camp is never full.



BHP Yandi Camp

*"BHP moves mountains, surely they should be able to work out to put people in camp in permanent rooms," says Steve.*

**"I'VE BEEN LIVING OUT OF A BAG FOR 11 YEARS – EVERY TIME I'VE GOT TO GO TO WORK, IT'S JUST DEPRESSING, I'VE GOT TO GO TO A LUGGAGE ROOM, FIND THE ROOM THEY'VE GIVEN ME, UNPACK MY GEAR, SET THE ROOM UP, THEN GO TO WORK.**

*"They can have 'R U Ok' barbecues, but if I say I'm not ok because I'm sick of living out of bags, they ignore it."*

Apart from accommodation, the code covers a range of issues including work design, shift length, ability to socialise, travel arrangements and communications.

Unions WA Assistant Secretary Owen Whittle said the code was a significant breakthrough for WA's FIFO workforce, which has been shaken by high rates of suicide.

*"The code is an unprecedented step forward and we welcome it very strongly.*

**"THE INDUSTRY IS ON NOTICE THAT IT NEEDS TO TAKE MENTAL HEALTH A LOT MORE SERIOUSLY. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE IT IN THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENT IN WRITING THAT HOTELLING IS HARMFUL AND THAT POOR COMMUNICATIONS AFFECT PEOPLE'S HEALTH."**

With ample information and clear guidelines in place, the ball is now in the court of employers and regulators to make sure conditions improve, he says. Otherwise, unions will push for the voluntary code to become legally enforceable regulation.

Western Mineworkers Alliance Organiser Andy Smith, who represents Rio Tinto mineworkers across a large inland region of the Pilbara, says the quality of camps varies enormously from one to the next even though they are all operated by contractor Sodexo.

The most common issue raised by members is lack of reliable phone and internet access to communicate with family.

**"THIS IS BROUGHT UP CONSISTENTLY," SAYS ANDY. "WITHOUT PHONE OR INTERNET RECEPTION YOU CAN'T KEEP IN TOUCH WITH LOVED ONES. WITH SHIFT WORK, THEY ONLY HAVE A NARROW WINDOW AND IF YOU CAN'T GET PHONE RECEPTION AT THAT TIME YOU MIGHT LOSE THAT WINDOW FOR THE DAY. "IT COULD BE DAYS BEFORE YOU GET TO SPEAK TO YOUR FAMILY."**

Another bugbear is poor and declining quality of food, with the meal budget per person getting smaller and smaller with cost-cutting. It's now common for FIFO workers to turn up for their swing with two bags – one with clothes and another with food to supplement what's on offer at camp. Then there's the constant challenge of poor maintenance on room facilities like air conditioners that affect workers' ability to sleep between shifts.

*"The code is a vast improvement on what was available previously," says Andy. "But it's only as good as the companies will take it seriously.*

*"Experience and history shows that these companies are not interested in substantially improving the quality of camp life for their employees – if anything they are interested in decreasing the cost of camp life."*

## WINNERS AND GRINNERS AT KIDS' FOOTY DAY



**OVER 250 KIDS FROM PRIMARY SCHOOLS ACROSS THE GUNNEDAH REGION IN NORTHERN NSW GATHERED FOR A GREAT DAY OF RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION AT THE ANNUAL COALMINERS CUP CARNIVAL IN APRIL.**

Over 250 kids from primary schools across the Gunnedah region in northern NSW gathered for a great day of rugby league competition at the annual Coalminers Cup Carnival in April.

The Coalminers Cup, established and sponsored by the CFMEU Northern Mining and NSW Energy District, is a long-running tradition in Gunnedah now in its 22nd year.

The event started out as the United Mineworkers Small Schools Carnival and focuses on giving kids from small local schools in mining regions an opportunity to participate in team sport, said CFMEU Organiser Ross Whitaker.

*"We have teams from all the local schools in Gunnedah, Narrabri, Boggabri and Manilla. These are all coal mining areas.*

*"Some of the schools in the smaller towns like Mullaley, Somerton and Maules Creek are tiny with only 10 or 15 kids in the whole school.*

*"The Coalminers Cup gives them a chance to form composite teams and participate – the kids and their parents really appreciate it."*



The Carnival had a strong showing of girls for the Oz Tag competition this year, with Barraba Public took out the girls' Oz Tag trophy.



Narrabri West Public School won the boys' rugby league competition after going through the round robin competition undefeated. They are this year's proud holders of the United Mineworkers of Australia Primary School Challenge Shield.

It was a thrill for the kids to have former Parramatta Eel and Canberra Raider Brad Williams to present the awards.

The kids had a great day out and formed memories for a lifetime, said Ross Whitaker, himself a former Greater Northern representative rugby league player.

**"ALMOST EVERY GUNNEDAH FIRST GRADE RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYER OVER THE LAST 15 YEARS HAS PLAYED IN THE COALMINERS DAY AND REMEMBERS AFFECTIONATELY THE T-SHIRTS AND GOODIES THEY RECEIVED ON THAT DAY."**

Other generous sponsors of the Coalminers Cup include Mine Super, Unity Bank, Slater and Gordon Lawyers, Country Rugby League and Namoi Valley Lodge.

*"It was a great day for the kids and for the community, we are looking forward to doing it all again next year,"* said Ross.

## GIVE US A BREAK: WOMEN HORRIFIED BY ANGLO'S TOILET TALK



**“MINEWORKERS, WHETHER MALE OR FEMALE, SHOULD BE ABLE TO STOP WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND USE THE TOILET FACILITIES IN THE CRIB ROOM WHEN THEY NEED TO, WITH NO QUESTIONS ASKED.”**

Jason Hill

### **WOMEN COAL MINEWORKERS HAVE REACTED ANGRILY TO BEING CANVASSED ABOUT THE USE OF FEMININE HYGIENE AND TOILETING PRODUCTS THAT WOULD REDUCE THEIR NEED TO TAKE BATHROOM BREAKS.**

AngloAmerican has surveyed women at some of its central Queensland coal mines about their familiarity and use of 'she-wees', menstrual cups and absorbent underpants.

The questions were part of a survey about how inclusive mine site facilities are for women, distributed to women at mines including Dawson and Moura in March.

*“Women mineworkers have told us they are disgusted that their employer would ask them about using she-wees and menstrual cups,”* said CFMEU Mining and Energy Industry Safety inspector Jason Hill.

### **“HOW WOMEN MANAGE THEIR PERSONAL HYGIENE IS NONE OF THE BOSSES’ BUSINESS.**

*“Surveying workers about these products suggests there is interest from the employer about introducing them.*

*“Whether or not women use particular products should make no difference to employers providing clean accessible toilet facilities and breaks for workers to use them when they need to.”*

Flagging the use of these product is particularly concerning in a work environment where mineworkers are regularly asked to 'hold on' and delay toilet breaks due to production imperatives, said Mr Hill.

*“Mineworkers, whether male or female, should be able to stop what they are doing and use the toilet facilities in the crib room when they need to, with no questions asked.*

*“But after telling dispatch they need a short break, workers are frequently asked to delay going to the toilet and continue the work they are doing.*

*“It’s no wonder women are worried about the prospects of she-wees, menstrual cups and absorbent underwear being introduced. The implication is that they should never stop for a toilet break, but should pee in their pants or out the side of their truck.*

*“I can completely understand the anger and disgust of the women who received this survey.*

**“IT IS A GREAT THING THAT MINING COMPANIES ARE EMPLOYING MORE WOMEN. BUT MINING COMPANIES SHOULDN'T BE PROMOTING THEMSELVES AS GREAT EMPLOYERS OF WOMEN IN GLOSSY BROCHURES, WHILE DENYING THEM TOILET BREAKS AND THEIR DIGNITY. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE.”**

# DARLING DOWNS POWER STATION WORKERS WALK OFF OVER UNFAIR OVERTIME DEMANDS



Darling Downs Power Station

**WORKERS AT THE DARLING DOWNS POWER STATION WALKED OFF THE JOB LAST WEEK, FRUSTRATED ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF TALKS FOR THEIR NEW ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT AFTER NINE MONTHS OF NEGOTIATIONS. FURTHER STOPPAGES ARE BEING CONSIDERED.**

*Workers have been attempting to negotiate a new, fairer deal that would remove the current requirement for workers to provide hundreds of hours of unpaid overtime, said CFMEU Mining and Energy Queensland Vice President Shane Bruncker.*

*"They walked off the job in disgust because the company doesn't appear to be listening to their reasonable concerns," said Shane.*

*"Currently, workers are in effect expected to be permanently on call through hours of unpaid overtime being built into their salary.*

**"THIS MODEL HAS LEFT WORKERS ANGRY AND BURNT OUT. WHEN THEY HAVE A BREAK FROM WORK, WORKERS WANT TO TRAVEL TO THE COAST AND SPEND TIME WITH THEIR FAMILIES – NOT HOVER AROUND WITHIN RANGE OF THE POWER STATION."**

*Workers are willing to compromise on pay rises in order to remove the system of unpaid hours owing, said Shane.*

*"Origin Energy management seem to think they own their workforce, even when people aren't at work. The workforce has made it very clear that they need to see change in this area."*

# MORRISON MOVES TO UNDO SKENE ENTITLEMENTS WIN

**THE MORRISON GOVERNMENT HAS INTERVENED TO WIND BACK THE CFMEU'S COURT WIN IN THE MATTER OF QUEENSLAND COAL MINER PAUL SKENE, WHICH FOUND HE WAS ENTITLED TO BACKPAID ANNUAL LEAVE AS HE WAS NOT GENUINELY CASUAL.**

The full Federal Court will this week hear the matter of *WorkPac v Rossato*, a case brought by labour hire giant WorkPac in response to Skene.

Scott Morrison's Jobs Minister Kelly O'Dwyer, who is quitting politics at the election, has intervened in the case with a submission strongly objecting to ripped off casuals being compensated for unpaid leave entitlements, dismissing it as 'double-dipping'.

CFMEU Mining and Energy General Secretary Grahame Kelly said the Morrison Government was showing its true colours by backing mining bosses over casual workers.

The LNP Government's intervention to wind back casual rights will give big mining companies the green light to keep exploiting casual labour hire workers, he said.

*"This Government has not only stood by and allowed the widespread casualisation of permanent jobs, it is now using the courts to try and stop casuals who have been ripped off under dodgy, unlawful employment arrangements from being compensated.*



*"Let's be clear, there is no double-dipping. Casual labour hire workers like Paul Skene work regular full-time hours on advance rosters but are paid less than the permanent workers next to them, as well as missing out on paid leave and having no job security.*

*"By claiming legitimate compensation is an undeserved 'windfall', this government is showing how completely out of touch it is with the concerns of working Australians."*

The Skene decision does not affect small business and is most relevant to mining multinationals. WorkPac supplies labour to global mining giants like BHP, Glencore and AngloAmerican.

The CFMEU will strongly defend the principle of the Skene decision and intends to pursue claims for mineworkers falsely classified as casuals. Stronger laws are needed to prevent the 'permanent casual' labour hire rort in coal mining.

# FROM THE SECRETARY

## Grahame Kelly

### YOUR VOTE THIS FEDERAL ELECTION

The looming federal election is an important one for mining and energy workers. We believe a change of government is by far the best outcome for mining and energy workers. Here are some of the reasons why:

#### Ending the casual labour hire rip-off

Casual labour hire is out of control in coal mining. Many labour hire mineworkers are casual for years on end – and they're paid much less than permanents. This is wrong.

The Liberal National Coalition has done nothing to support permanent jobs. Nationals MPs have been caught out telling porkies, saying the government has 'fixed' casualisation. Far from it.



Their proposed Fair Work Amendment (Right to Request Casual Conversion) Bill hasn't even passed through Parliament. And it only allows for casuals to ask for a permanent job. We all know what the boss would say.

Labor has committed to giving casual workers the right to convert to a permanent role after 12 months, if they wish to; and 'same job same pay' for labour hire workers, to stop mine operators using labour hire to drive down wages and conditions. These changes would make a real difference to improving pay and permanency for labour hire workers.

#### Better wages and fairer workplace bargaining

Our members at Port Kembla Coal Terminal were locked out for over 50 over days straight and had their Enterprise Agreement terminated while trying to negotiate a new deal. This kind of aggressive action from employers during bargaining is unfair.

Under the Abbott/Turnbull/Morrison Government, it has become much harder for workers to bargain fairly with employers.

Labor has committed to making bargaining fairer in a number of ways, like stopping employers getting a small handful of workers to vote up an agreement that covers a whole workforce; introducing multi-employer bargaining where a fair agreement can't be reached at the enterprise level; and preventing employers from terminating an agreement during bargaining to put unfair pressure on workers.



Making bargaining fairer is a way to improve conditions and increase wages, which have stagnated under the Coalition.

#### Energy policy to protect working people

Some members raise concerns with us about Labor's energy policy. There is a lot of misinformation being spread about Labor's approach to the coal industry, by desperate National Party politicians trying to hang on to their seats. Bill Shorten has said that coal will be an important part of Australia's energy mix going forward and that coal exports will continue for many decades. This approach is backed up by forecasts from the International Energy Agency that Australia's coal production will continue to grow for the next 20 years, due to customer demand. Labor has also said that the Adani development will proceed if it meets its regulatory requirements.

Meanwhile, there are plenty of other developments in the pipeline, like Whitehaven's new Winchester South coal mine that is being fast tracked by the Queensland Government. It will generate 950 new coal mining jobs.

Labor's Just Transition Authority is designed to support workers in coal-fired power stations that face closure. While Queensland has a relatively new fleet of coal-fired power stations that will be in operation for decades to come, some coal-fired power stations in NSW and Victoria face closure much sooner – their owners have said so. We've seen the devastating impact of the sudden closure of Hazelwood in 2017, which the current LNP government did nothing to prevent.

The Just Transition Authority has nothing to do with Adani, approvals of coal mines or hastening power station closures. It is relevant to power station workers in southern states where owners have announced that power stations will close. Only Labor has a policy to look after these affected workers by investing in new jobs and pooled redundancy schemes.

**ON MAY 18, LET'S CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT AND CHANGE THE RULES FOR MINING AND ENERGY WORKERS.**

**GRAHAME KELLY,**  
General Secretary