

August 2020

Common Cause.



**BHP SAYS
NO TO
EQUAL PAY
FOR OS**

**CLAIMS WORKERS HAVE
'NO CONCERNS'**



BHP SAYS NO TO EQUAL PAY FOR OS WORKERS



A senior executive of BHP's in-house labour hire provider Operations Services has told the Union the company has heard of no concerns from workers about their terms and conditions of employment.

Organiser Jason Lipscombe said he didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the claim in a letter from Mark Swinnerton, Vice President of BHP OS.

"I HAVE BEEN SPEAKING TO HUNDREDS OF OPERATIONS SERVICES WORKERS AT QUEENSLAND MINES OVER THE PAST YEAR AND EVERY TIME I GO OUT ON SITE I HEAR THE SAME COMPLAINTS" said Jason.

"They include getting out of the pit constantly late, having to work extra time for no overtime payment, having to work Christmas Day and Boxing Day and working next to other BHP workers but getting \$30,000 to \$50,000 less for doing the same job."

OS workers are being invited to participate in a survey about their biggest workplace issues.

Take the survey, or share it with a friend who works at OS: <https://www.thinkfairbhp.com.au/survey>

Initial results suggest that only a very small minority of OS workers think their wages and conditions are satisfactory for a permanent coal miner.

The Union's legal action against the two Enterprise Agreements covering OS workers is continuing, following a decision in July upholding the CFMEU's appeal against their approval. Operations Services have been given more time to respond to arguments raised by the Union and a further appeal will be held later this month.

After the July decision, General President Tony Maher wrote to BHP CEO Mike Henry, calling on the company to end the unfair pay differential between Operations Services and direct BHP employees and offer the same pay for the same work.

"The simplest and fairest approach would be for BHP to simply offer Operations Services employees employment under those existing enterprise agreements. After all, BHP freely negotiated these agreements and regarded them as fair and appropriate for the production and maintenance workers on those sites."

A letter from Operations Services Vice President Mark Swinnerton in response confirmed the company had no interest in closing the gap in pay and conditions with direct BHP employees. He persisted with the company line that workers were fortunate not to be employed as casual labour hire and claimed that 'no concerns about these terms and conditions have been raised by our employees.'

At least, no concerns that have made it to his office. The CFMEU wants to hear the concerns of OS workers and address them through genuine bargaining for a new agreement.

All OS workers are encouraged to register their details on our site thinkfairbhp.com.au.



'ANGEL IN THE SKY' SAVED OUR LIVES



For over 35 years Northern District coal miners have poured millions of dollars into the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. Duralie Lodge Member Chris Griffith and his wife Rachel have both been rescued by the chopper after harrowing accidents.

CEO Richard Jones said coal miners' support had been essential to starting and sustaining the iconic chopper service.

"WE HAD A MASSIVE CONTRIBUTION FROM THE MINeworkERS AND THE UNION WAY BACK WHICH GAVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A SECOND HELICOPTER HERE. IF ONE WAS BROKEN, WE COULD ROLL THE OTHER ONE OUT. IT'S IN THE MULTI-MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THE MINeworkERS HAVE CONTRIBUTED OVER THE YEARS."

Chris Griffith was still oblivious to all this in 2001 when he was flown to hospital after being knocked unconscious in a head on collision with another trail bike rider in remote bushland.

"I had parts of my kneecap in my thigh," says Chris. He'd also broken the longest and strongest bone in the human body – the thigh bone.

"It's the hardest bone in the human body to break, and I shattered it. I broke my motorbike helmet, split it up the centre... it was a pretty fair hit."

Chris was just 15 at the time of his accident. He is now married with two delightful daughters, 6-year-old Alyvia and 3-year-old Maycie.

But that fateful trail bike accident is not the only reason he and his wife Rachel run an annual Charity Golf Day at Wingham to raise money for the service.



The family were once again touched by the service in 2010.

"My wife just left the house and no sooner than three minutes after I heard a loud crash outside, gut instinct was 'something's not right'," says Chris.

"I jumped in my car, it was just on dark, as I got closer I worked out it was my wife's car that was involved in a motor vehicle accident.

"I thought she was deceased, that's how bad the accident was.

"It took emergency services an hour and a half to cut my wife free of the car.

"And at that time I could hear the Westpac helicopter in the air above us, coming to land, and just hearing that noise was a sense of relief knowing you've got some of the most highly trained experts on board that aircraft."

Rachel had broken both wrists and both ankles. It was eight months before she'd be back on her feet.

While Chris and Rachel raise money for the service to say thank you through their annual golf day – other Hunter Valley miners use raising money for the lifesaving aircraft as a chance to build community.

Matt Dodd is one of the organisers behind the annual WestPac Rescue Helicopter Service Charity Football Day where teams from all over NSW compete for glory.

"Originally we just started off in the Upper Hunter, but it's slowly started to progress, we've got some Mudgee teams, some teams from Narrabri, down to the South Coast, and now even Queensland teams wanting to have a crack," says Matt, who's also Vice-President of the Mt Thorley-Warkworth Lodge.

COAL MINERS' SUPPORT FOR ICONIC HELICOPTER RESCUE SERVICE



Seven years ago the competition started as a knock out, but now with over 20 teams competing it's a pooled and round robin competition where teams go onto semi-finals and a Grand Final.

And while coal miners traditionally have looked after each other, no matter what Lodge or region they're from, there is no quarter given, or asked for, after the whistle blows.

"There's been some very dominant teams... the Ashton Wombats have been very strong then you've got Austar, you've got Wambo Wolves who have been strong over the years, and Ravensworth Rhinos have also been a strong team."

And as Matt says there's certainly plenty of talent on the paddock.

"The ex NRL talent is quite hefty throughout the competition and it actually becomes quite competitive once the whistle blows, you've got players like Jesse Royal, Liam Foran, Jack Afamasaga who played for the Storm, Eels and the Sharks, Terrance Seu Seu, Adam Clydsdale and Reegan Tanner just to name a few," he says.

Last year's grand final was a cracker when the Wambo Wolves finally won the shield.

"They've been a dominant team throughout the past three or four years and they've only just missed out on the cherry quite a few times so to see them boys get the win over the previous winners the Bengalla Badgers was pretty epic," says Matt.

Matt says it's a great day - and to put Saturday November 7th in the diary.

"Get down to Pirtek Park Singleton on November 7th, there's a kid's fun zone, there's heaps of stuff for the whole family and you'll see some cracking footy."

And it's no small money spinner - the dollars raised are large.

"In the last six years coming into our seventh now we've raised \$412,000, with the competition last year being the biggest one at \$120,000, each year we keep eclipsing our mark and hopefully we can go one step further this year."

And all that money goes into that state-of-the-art aircraft operated by the Westpac service.

"The helicopters we have today are 7 tonne, and worth about \$16 million dollars each, with a \$2 million medical fit out in the back," says Richard Jones.

"We have four in Northern NSW and another organisation covering the south have eight.

"They are all identical so we have 'inter-operability' so a paramedic in Wollongong if he or she is deployed to Newcastle, or Lismore or Tamworth, everything, even the glove holders, are in the same spot which is all about reducing risk to as low as practically possible.

Richard Jones has nothing but admiration for the contributions of CFMEU members.

"I've been to plenty of mine sites to thank the girls and guys and thanked them for their contributions," he says.

"The CFMEU have a position on our board of directors and we've had some wonderful contributors from the mining union.

"It's the single biggest donation we get every year is from the coal miners of this region, so I couldn't thank them highly enough.

"COALMINERS FROM THIS REGION HAVE PROUDLY SAID FOR YEARS 'THAT THE LITTLE ANGEL IN THE SKY SHOULD WE EVER NEED THEM BUT THEY'RE ALSO HAPPY TO SUPPORT THE WIDER COMMUNITY WITH THEIR DONATIONS.'"

NEW ACLAND MINE EXTENSION

**Get on with it!
Our message
to the
Queensland
Government
on New Acland
stage 3**



Our Union has joined with the Australian Workers Union in calling on the Queensland Government to approve Stage 3 of the New Acland coal mine. Coal miner and delegate Michael Hartin said New Acland workers were fed up after waiting 13 years for the project to get signed off.

In a joint statement, CFMEU National President Tony Maher and AWU National Secretary Daniel Walton said coal mining jobs were essential to economic recovery.

"With the economic effects of COVID-19 playing havoc with the state's economy, and the prospect of more job cuts at New Acland in the near future due to the delay of this project, it is the view of our unions that the Queensland Government can no longer just sit on the sidelines.

"THE PREMIER HAS THE POWER TO ACT TODAY. SHE SHOULD DO SO. IT IS UNACCEPTABLE FOR THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO RELY ON THE EXCUSE THAT THE MATTER IS 'BEFORE THE COURTS'...IT IS POSSIBLE TO BOG THIS PROJECT DOWN IN ENDLESS LITIGATION. THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT OPPONENTS OF THE EXPANSION PLAN TO DO"

The mine's owners, New Hope Coal, have been trying to get approval for 13 years for Stage 3 of the pit, a project which will generate \$7 billion.

If given the green light the mine expansion will save the 150 existing jobs and create 700 more positions - but due to the delays the mine has already lost 150 jobs at the mine and at the port of Brisbane.

Michael Hartin said New Acland coal miners were disappointed by the Government's inaction.

"People at the mine are fed up, the whole community's fed up. We've seen 150 job losses already, we're now seeing another 25, as well as the flow on effect from cafes, restaurants, service stations around the area - they are also being directly affected by these job losses.

"For a lot of these politicians names like Goombungee, Meringandan, Oakey, they're just names on a map, but to us, they are our areas where we've raised our kids, where we support our local communities and our shops, and to be honest the mood is angry, because a lot of people just think the government just doesn't give a stuff," he said.

What makes matter worse for locals is the preferential treatment the Adani Carmichael Mine in the Galilee Basin further North.

"For us it was disappointing to see the government go out of their way and approve Adani even while they were before the courts, even while they did not have any jobs on the line.

"Here at New Acland it is owned by an Australian company, mining Australian coal, with Australian workers who are actually paying their tax in Australia.

"For us thirteen years is way too long to say an application for a mine to still be waiting.

"At the moment for us it feels like they have actually left and abandoned regional Queensland."

THE MANY COLOURS OF HYDROGEN.... AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR COKING COAL



SO YOU THOUGHT HYDROGEN WAS AN INVISIBLE GAS? WELL YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT IT'S COLOUR-CODED WHEN DISCUSSED AS AN ENERGY TECHNOLOGY. AND IT MAY SOUND ARCAINE, BUT IT HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF COKING COAL IN STEELMAKING. SO - IT MATTERS FOR MINING JOBS.

Hydrogen is the lightest of the gases and does not occur naturally in large quantities. But it can be made by breaking down more complex substances.

It is widely touted as a solution to the need for a flexible fuel that is low emission – because when you burn hydrogen it combines with oxygen to form . . . water.

The most common – and cheapest - type of hydrogen we have now is “grey” hydrogen – it is made from methane, otherwise known as natural gas. The next is “brown” hydrogen – made from oil or coal.

The problem with hydrogen from these sources, from an environmental viewpoint, is that a lot of carbon dioxide is released in the production process.

That, it contributes to global warming. So the next way hydrogen can be produced is from gas, coal or oil, but with the use of CCS (Carbon Capture and Storage) technology so the emissions don't enter the atmosphere. This gets called “blue” hydrogen, and it is what is being piloted in a A\$500m project in the Latrobe Valley right now that could turn brown coal into an export industry: <https://tinyurl.com/y5kfg9d2>

Finally, there is “green” hydrogen. This doesn't come from fossil fuels at all – the production process involves an “electrolyser” that splits water into the separate components of hydrogen and oxygen. But this is only a zero or near-zero greenhouse gas emission process if the electrolyzers are run on renewable energy.

Green hydrogen is what the environmentalists love, but the problem is that it is the most expensive way to make hydrogen. Cost estimates are changing rapidly, but currently green hydrogen is well over US\$9 per

By Peter Colley - National Research Director

kilogram, while grey hydrogen from natural gas is under US\$2 per kg.

The National Hydrogen Strategy adopted by the Australian Government currently seeks to develop both green and blue hydrogen, and the ambitious goal is for those technologies to achieve a price of less than US\$2 per kg.

Now none of this really matters that much for the production of electricity – wind and solar power are very much cheaper. However, it is possible that hydrogen could be used as a “store” of energy to run gas turbines in peak periods or when wind and solar are not available. It would be even more costly than gas turbines running natural gas, but would be near-zero emission and only needed a small part of the time.

Hydrogen can be used in fuel cells in motor vehicles, and as a replacement for gas in industrial processes.

Where it gets close to home for coal mineworkers is that hydrogen can be used to replace coking coal in the making of iron and steel.

Coking coal plays a chemical role in the making of iron; it is not just a source of heat energy as with power generation. Coking coal is used as a “reductant” in a basic oxygen furnace (BOF) and what that includes is stripping the oxygen out of iron ore. Which is why the making of iron and steel involves a lot of greenhouse gas emissions.

But there is an alternative technology for making new iron called Direct Reduction Iron (DRI) which can use hydrogen to play the role of coking coal and in doing so eliminates most greenhouse gas emissions.

This is not an immediate threat to the role of coking coal as it is very expensive. Commodities researchers



Wood Mackenzie (Woodmac) say a rule of thumb is that iron ore currently costs about US\$380 per tonne to produce with coking coal, but with hydrogen it is more like US\$900 per tonne.

Hydrogen needs to fall in price to under US\$3 per kg to be competitive. Steelmakers in other countries that claim to be making steel with hydrogen (eg Thyssen Krupp in Germany) are in fact using grey hydrogen not green. And there is the obvious problem that most of the world's steel mills using Basic Oxygen Furnaces rather than DRI so they will need to be extensively rebuilt to use hydrogen.

WoodMac's view is that it will take until 2040 for DRI iron with hydrogen to become commercially viable, and much longer still before the world's steel mills substantively shift to it.

So coking coal is around for a while yet, but the notion that it will always be required to make steel is wrong.

If you want to explore this issue further – and see how there might be a large new “green steel” industry located in the coal fields of NSW and central Queensland, then look at the recent report of the Grattan Institute, a middle-of-the-road think tank that reckons green steel could be a new large export industry for Australia – based in the current coal fields: <https://grattan.edu.au/report/start-with-steel/>

SHUTDOWNS HIT GLENCORE PITS

Thousands of coal mineworkers will be affected by temporary shutdowns next month as Australia's second biggest coal producer Glencore takes steps to slow production.

Shutdowns will affect coal mines across NSW's Western and Northern Districts as well as Queensland. Glencore said in a statement that global demand for export coal had been impacted by COVID-19 and a combination of temporary site and equipment shutdowns at a number of its operations would be used to manage a reduction in coal production.

The Union was informed about the shutdowns and told that they would be timed to coincide with September-October school holidays. Affected workers will be able to access leave entitlements during the shutdown – although contractors may be left unpaid, depending on their terms of employment.

Affected mines include Ulan in Western NSW, most of Glencore's Hunter Valley mines and Newlands and Collinsville mines in Queensland.

General President Tony Maher said temporary shutdowns were a feature of the mining industry, which is vulnerable to global economic volatility and changes in export demand.

“We support shutdowns where they are an alternative to cutting jobs,” he said.

“We urge all operators to do everything they can to protect jobs at this time, including contractors and labour hire workers who in many cases have shown years of loyalty and should not be treated as disposable.”

Lodge and District officials are meeting with the company at a site level to address Members' questions and concerns.

Visit our website - www.commoncause.cfmeu.org.au

FROM THE ACTU PRESIDENT Michele O'Neil

A national jobs plan - and five ways to get started



The fight against COVID-19 is one we are all in together.

The impacts of the pandemic are still emerging, and we are all trying to imagine what our country will look like in the future.

We have seen the immediate impact on jobs and industries, and know already that some sections of our community will be hit harder than others.

Young people, women, casual and precarious workers, and our essential and frontline services are bearing the brunt of this terrible pandemic, and unless we act decisively, we risk generational social and economic harm.

The ACTU, with economist Dr Jim Stanford and the Center for Future Work have developed a National Economic Reconstruction Plan, with 5 concrete ideas to get started.

History tells us that left to its own devices – the economy is poised for years of depression post-COVID.

We cannot and must not accept a jobless recovery or a recovery that leaves the next generation with a social deficit from which they will never recover.

For the most part - this pandemic has bought out the best in our country – our incredible health system, our strong workplace health and safety regulations, our highly skilled public sector and the Australian people's belief that our Governments should stand up and make big decisions for the benefit of the people they serve.

The Australian people know that the next steps – national economic reconstruction – can only be led and delivered by Government.

Australian Governments have stepped up and done this national building recovery before, and we can do it again.

Australian Unions offer this plan with optimism, hope, and determination. We look forward to continuing to work with Governments and the Australian public to rebuild a stronger and fairer Australia. We are committed to making sure that working people's voices are always heard.

Download the jobs plan here:

<https://commoncause.cfmeu.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/national-economic-reconstruction-plan.pdf>

- 1 PERMANENT FREE CHILDCARE
- 2 150,000 FREE TAFE PLACES
- 3 REVITALISE ARTS AND TOURISM
- 4 INVEST IN NATION-BUILDING PROJECTS
- 5 SUPERCHARGE LOCAL MANUFACTURING

READ OUR FULL PLAN

[ACTION.AUSTRALIANUNIONS.ORG.AU/NERP](https://action.australianunions.org.au/nerp)

We're for workers

Australian Unions



NEW PODCAST OUT NOW!

The August episode of the CFMEU Mining and Energy podcast is out now, giving you the latest on BHP's Operations Services, the fight for jobs at New Acland and the proud history of coal miners' support for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter

commoncause.cfmeu.org.au/podcast