GONE FISHING
HARD AT WORK IN HOBART

WHAT LIES BENEATH
A LOOK AT MINE SAFETY

PEDAL TO THE METAL
ALL ABOUT ALUMINIUM

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A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR REPS

It has been a good year for the members of the Australian Workers’ Union, with many significant battles being fought and won. As 2010 draws to a close, the AWU finds itself in the enviable position of being the fastest growing union in Australia. While many other unions are struggling with membership decreases, our Union is getting bigger across the country. While the AWU National Office and each Branch has dedicated significant resources to the task of growing our Union, a lot of the credit for our increased membership should go to our workplace Reps. It is the Reps in the workplace who sign up most of our new members, and who look after our members day to day to make sure they remain AWU members. They are the face of our Union in their workplaces, and they do a bloody great job.

Being an AWU Rep can sometimes be a difficult and thankless task. Often times, when you are doing a good job, you don’t hear from anyone, but when things go wrong you cop a bit of flak. AWU Reps are not paid for their services, they do it out of a commitment to unionism, and a commitment to helping out their fellow workers. It is a fundamental right for each union member to be represented by their union, and often times it is their workplace Rep who is their representative.

People become AWU Reps because their fellow members see them as leaders in the workplace. Many AWU members don’t feel they have the necessary skills to represent themselves, and that is why they choose the people that they do to be their Representative.

AWU Reps are the face of our Union in their workplaces, and they do a bloody great job.”

As the year draws to a close, I’d like to thank each and every AWU Representative across Australia for their hard work and dedication. Without their commitment and leadership qualities, our Union would be much worse off.

I would also like to wish a very safe and merry festive season to all AWU members and their families, and I look forward to working with you all again in 2011 to keep our Union strong.

PLAYING BY THE RULES

The misuse of global free trade rules and regulations – especially by China – has hurt Australian jobs and led to the collapse of our manufacturing sector. New jobs which could be created in Australia in the fledgling ‘green technology sector’ – such as solar panels – have had their natural growth stunted because China has adopted an aggressive policy to distort trade in its favour.

The Australian Workers’ Union was an early supporter of free trade as a way of creating good new jobs for our membership. But we won’t stand by and allow jobs to disappear overseas, because not everyone is playing by the same rule book.

We believe there is plenty of evidence that China has decided to ignore the rules of the game set by the WTO and the ILO. They are winning new opportunities for Chinese companies by tearing up the rule book. Delegates to the next AWU national conference will discuss and vote on a plan to trigger a major public campaign in 2011 to ensure our Government does not stand by and allow Australian jobs to disappear overseas.

Free trade can work for all economies, but only if all countries agree to play by the same rules, and respect the umpire’s decision. Unfortunately a series of Australian governments have had a bad record when it comes to defending Australian manufacturing jobs from the subsidized dumped products. We are witnessing that especially in AWU manufacturing workplaces, in steel and aluminium extrusion.

Increasingly in Australia, the USA, Canada and Europe trade unions have begun pressuring their governments to take action against China. We’ve joined with the Steelworkers in the USA and Canada to campaign to defend our jobs against cheap subsidised Chinese imports. The Steelworkers have already had some success in rolling back the Chinese juggernaut.

We’re now campaigning for Australia to look at the models adopted by both the US and Canadian governments to fight the unfair subsidised manufacturing practices behind these Chinese imports. The next step in our campaign will be unveiled at the AWU’s National Conference in February 2011.
MINING INDUSTRY SAFETY

out of the dust of the Beaconsfield rock fall in 2006 emerged new interest from the Australian public in mining safety. After breathing a collective sigh of relief when Brant Webb and Todd Russell made it out alive, and following a period of mourning for Larry Knight, who lost his life in the collapse, there was a resounding call to operators and the Tasmanian government to make sure it never happened again.

Five years on, and new legislation has finally been passed which deals with the occupational hazards of an inherently risky business. In fact, the long process toward the new legislation had been under way since the publication of a coroner’s report following the deaths of Matthew Lister and Jarrod Jones in a rock fall at the Renison Bell tin mine in 2001, and that of Sidney Pierce at the same site two years later.

The coroner’s investigation into these incidents found there had been serious failure in Tasmania’s workplace safety legislation to deal with mining. In his 2008 report coroner Don Jones asserted, “These inquests have highlighted what I perceive to be fundamental deficiencies.”

In short, safety at the mines must be subject to inspections by Workplace Standards Tasmania to ensure each site adheres to agreed safety processes. The new positions call for a great deal of mining expertise, something which may not necessarily happen at the mines but when workers are making their way home. Hag says there have been three recent incidents of workers driving home at the end of a long shift and, due to fatigue, not completing their journeys. The management plan calls for more rest for workers and more varied jobs.

AUW Tasmanian Branch Assistant Secretary Robert Flanagan said there was little disagreement in the tripartite talks between the AWU, the Tasmanian Minerals Council and Workplace Standards Tasmania to establish the new legislation, which Tasmanian Minister for Workplace Relations David O’Byrne hopes will be enacted early next year.

The Workplace Health and Safety Amendment (Mine Safety) Bill 2010 legislation is broad in scope and built on three key platforms. It deals with the hazards that exist in the mining industry through audits and inspections, it creates standards for ventilation in underground mines and, arguably most importantly, it opens the lines of communication between workers, operators and management. From these general themes, more definitive regulations will be established, particularly in regard to establishing hazard-management systems.

Robert says the lack of communication between workers and bosses and the lack of an opportunity for workers to voice their concerns was a major contributor to the Beaconsfield disaster. “There was a sense of powerlessness at Beaconsfield,” he says. “If workers had a forum to express their concerns, Beaconsfield may never have happened.”

Under the new rules, workers at each site will elect one of their own as an employee safety representative. Workers elected to this role by their peers would be the first point of contact for workers to voice their concerns regarding any potential safety issues. The industry in Tasmania will also be subject to inspections by Workplace Standards Tasmania to ensure each site adheres to agreed safety processes.

Robert estimates that an appropriately qualified inspector could earn four times as much “and climbing” in the private sector than they would working for Workplace Standards Tasmania. However, aside from this concern about potential difficulties in recruitment, it is certain that mine workers in Tasmania and their loved ones will be able to breathe easier when the legislation and subsequent regulations are implemented.

“The new rules should improve hazard management, with exposure to hazards substantially reduced,” Robert says.

Photos: Getty

As the world rejoiced the rescue of the trapped Chilean miners, we were reminded of our own mine collapse at Beaconsfield in Tasmania. Aaron Bertram looks at current Australian mining industry safety...

Queensland

Fatigue is the focus in Queensland, where relations between the miners, unions and the government are generally positive. However, 12-hour shifts and repetitive work is a potential killer, says AWU Queensland Branch Organiser Hag Harrison, who is involved in compiling a draft fatigue management plan for the industry. Fatigue is a difficult problem to quantify – the fatalities are not necessarily happening at the mines but when workers are making their way home. Hag says there have been three recent incidents of workers driving home at the end of a long shift and, due to fatigue, not completing their journeys.

New South Wales

AWU Greater NSW Branch Vice-President and Northern Regional Organiser, Glenn Seton, says that while there were no

What lies beneath...
THE WIDELY COVERED August 5 collapse at the Copiapo copper mine in Chile cemented concerns for mining safety in the public consciousness. More than a billion people round the world tuned in to watch its 33 survivors being winched the 700 metres back to the surface of the earth after 69 days underground. The irony of this story is that the miners had access to an emergency ladder in a ventilation shaft designed to deal with exactly this type of incident. However, the mine’s owners had neglected to finish it, so the workers attempt at self-rescue came to an end only one-third of the way up.

Safety had long been an issue at the relatively small facility, with eight workers losing their lives there in 12 years. It was even forced to close down in 2007 after relatives of a miner who had been killed sued the company. The installation of emergency ladders was one of the conditions of it reopening.

Union man “Super” Mario Sepulveda was the group’s unofficial leader and despite urging the media to treat him as just a miner, he was widely credited as the driving force supporting the morale that helped the miners survive those long dark days in a hole in the ground.

After a visit with his family, Mario warned Chile’s mining authorities and corporations that this incident would be a turning point in industrial relations in Chile in the way that Beaconsfield put mining safety on the map in Australia.

“I think that this country has to understand once and for all, that we have to change the way we work, he said. “The working world needs lots of changes. We, the miners, we won’t let it rest.”

Western Australia
WA is in the process of a major overhaul of mining safety regulations. And, like in South Australia, limited union access to sites is the main obstacle in making mines safer for workers in WA, where there have been 11 fatalities on sites since June 2008. This is in a state where individual contracts had been used long before WorkChoices and one which was stridently anti-union even before Howard. AWU WA Branch Secretary Stephen Price describes the relationship between the largest miner, BHP Billiton, and the Union as “strained”. However, talks are occurring to bring WA legislation up to that which governs the much more stringent offshore industry. This will see an increased focus on a risk-management approach where the onus would be on the companies to put in place their own processes which would be regularly inspected by an external auditor.
The mining, refining and smelting of bauxite makes the aluminium industry one of Australia’s most lucrative export industries. But the Union’s role in representing the industry’s workers has been a tough battle. Paul Robinson reports...

The aluminium industry generates exports worth more than $50 billion a year. The industry is an export heavyweight, especially in Western Australia and Victoria. And it’s a big workplace. Between them, Australia’s bauxite mines, refineries, smelters, extraction mills and rolling plants employ more than 15,000 workers, including contractors.

Unfortunately, the giant multinational companies that produce aluminium in Australia – Alcoa, BHP, Tomago, Hydro, Rio Tinto – have no particular loyalty to this country – they will operate wherever it is cheapest, and they are happy to flex this muscle regularly in negotiations with workers over wages and conditions.

The AWU is the main union representing workers in aluminium refineries, smelters, mines and plants across Australia.

“The main battle is keeping permanent employment and getting the companies to recognise the role of organised labour in the workplace,” AWU National Organiser Liam O’Brien says. “It depends what sector you’re talking about. In extrusion, for instance, there’s been a massive rise in non-union companies in the past five years because the market has expanded and a lot of Chinese companies have become involved.”

With smelting and refining, the key issues are a supply of cheap power, environmental concerns and working conditions. “Some of these companies simply don’t want to have a third party involved in their workplace negotiations,” Liam says. “Rio Tinto is pretty hard-line; Alcoa is not as bad – that said, we’ve been taking industrial action in WA for seven months!”

Global concerns

Foreign ownership is obviously an issue when it comes to negotiations on awards and conditions. Albeit with some Australian investment, all the major players are giant foreign multinationals. Again, it’s a matter of picking your battles. Last year, the AWU opposed state-owned foreign companies buying into the Australian resources sector when Chinalco (a Chinese state-owned aluminium company) attempted to increase its stake in Rio Tinto to 19 per cent. Australia’s seven smelters and six refineries are mostly located in regional towns where alternative employment is hard to find. When labour is under the gun, there is a potential for these places to become “ghost towns”.

Research undertaken in 2008 by Per Capita for the Australian Workers’ Union entitled The Full-Cost Economics of Climate Change – Aluminium: A Case Study suggests average unemployment could rise above 30 per cent in refinery towns and 15 per cent in smelter towns – a savage king-hit. The big players need encouragement to consider the impacts of their decisions on these small towns.

As Liam says, “In the case of Alcoa or Rio Tinto, you’re talking about highly profitable companies. We’re about seeing the wealth created in these towns stays in the communities, rather than in some CEO’s pocket in New York.”

Industry perils

A major grievance is safety and the lack thereof, particularly on non-union sites. There is also concern about the lack of consultation on workplace changes and a desire for parity with sites that already have collective agreements in place.

“Safety is a huge concern in refining, smelting, mining – they all use significant heavy machinery, there are hazardous materials, and workers are often subject to extreme temperatures,” AWU National Campaign Coordinator Daniel Walton says. When companies try to cut costs, it always affects safety negatively. “Little things, such as slimming over upgrades on walkways and materials, the basics are often overlooked,” Daniel says. “Particularly in non-union sites, safety committees are set up and represented by managers or supervisors, with very little input from workers.”

For organised labour, it’s been a long time between drinks. Since the heyday of union power in the 1990s and ‘80s, companies have worked steadily to reduce union influence in the workplace. The Howard regime’s WorkChoices laws finally gave employers the ability to undermine collective action and shift the industrial relations culture to the individual contract. This, in turn, made it easier for companies to completely de-unionise sites.

The AWU strategy has been to build strength at existing sites over the past three years. Now it is shifting to a broader approach, targeting more non-union sites around the country and working with the Branches to organise workers.

“The AWU has seen a massive increase in membership over the past two years,” Daniel says. “There are certainly a number of operations in the aluminium industry, with fairly hostile employers and anti-union strategies in place, that we’re starting to gain significant traction. In some cases they are actually sites that had been organised and were then de-unionised. With renewed focus and push, we’re managing to turn things around.”

The AWU has only been involved in award bargaining with one smelter over the past two years. However, all smelters are due to sit at the bargaining table in the next six months. “There have been quite a few issues,” Liam O’Brien says. “At Alcoa in Victoria, they’re trying to reduce manning and that sort of thing. That’s been a bit of a fight. And it brings up a few safety concerns.”

Negotiations are looking promising for saving jobs – after 18 months’ hard work – at Rio Tinto’s Gove refinery at...

THE ORGANISER
Craigh Beveridge
Capital Aluminium, Perth

IT’S A BIT of a change of direction for me. I’ve only been with the AWU for about 15 months. I worked for a stockfeed mill called Wesfeeds; I was a delegate there for 10 years. We worked under an EBA for that time and even when the Howard Government was in, we were on a good deal. Nothing could change or be taken from us and every two years we were up for a renegotiation on percentages for pay increases. Obviously, I’ve taken that little bit of experience to some of the sites I’m dealing with now, with those EBAs coming up, and just give it my best shot.
Nuhulbuy in the Northern Territory. And right now, agreements are being negotiated at Alcoa refineries and mines south of Perth.

The extrusion and rolling mill sector has been the AWU’s most successful battlefield. It recently unionised and has started bargaining with Olympic Aluminium, one of the non-union companies in Victoria that, as Liam says, “had crept up on us.”

Another win was with G James Extrusions – a national dispute over three states earlier this year. “The company started offering 2.5 per cent with no back pay, and wanted to take protection off the guys,” he says. “We went on strike and ended up with a wage offer between 4 per cent and 5 per cent, six months’ back pay, improvements in sick leave and redundancy arrangements.”

This agreement was accepted by over 90 per cent of members. The Capral plant in Perth, WA, makes window frames among other things. With a workforce of 52, the site was pretty unorganised and management anti-union until a few months ago. Now, according to Daniel Walton, they are very close to voting on an agreement. “These companies expand into other areas and don’t highlight their operations,” says Daniel. “It’s a matter of doing research then having a chat about what’s been achieved at other sites.”

Organiser Craig Beveridge has been on the job for the past 12 months. “When I first stepped in, we had two members and it was a bit of a rough road and management didn’t want a bar of me,” he says. “But I kept chipping away, and now we’ve built up to being about 12 guys off 50 per cent.”

Steep learning curve

With all on common law contracts, the major complaint was the lack of career path, and workers were doing the same job side-by-side for wildly differing pay packets. “There was no classification structure,” Craig says. “That was the most tedious part of this agreement. But I think management now realises if you don’t have some incentives to keep your workforce, the younger blokes will head up north chasing big money when the boom hits.”

It’s been a steep learning curve for Craig, who had only been with the AWU for a couple of months when he started organising the Capral site.

“The previous management were anti-union and there’d been problems with how they were running the shop,” he says. “They didn’t even do time and motion rates. I couldn’t believe they thought they could get away with it in 2010!”

About to talk money with the company, Craig is cautiously optimistic. “At the end of the day, standing on level structures is no good for either of us. We eventually need to even up the wage playing field, but obviously that’s not going to happen overnight.”

BHP’s Worsley Aluminium mine and refinery in WA is another site where workers had been on common law contracts, but were concerned about losing parity with other operations and issues such as unfair dismissal, and also becoming conscious of their limited bargaining power as individuals. With changes in the Fair Work Australia laws, the AWU has been building membership at Worsley since August last year. Organiser Craig Ramirez says the signs are encouraging. “It took a lot of groundwork, but we’ve about doubled our membership to about 80 members, and we’ve got good Delegates in there, some strong guys.”

The site had been fairly anti-union, but the future looks brighter. “Sometimes BHP tends to do what they please,” says Craig. “But we’ve got a base now to give us leverage. Our members know if they get hauled up on a disciplinary issue or any other reason, we can represent them. It’s harder for the company to exert that external pressure.”

Tough tactics

The Rio Tinto Alcan smelter at Bell Bay, in Tasmania, was Australia’s first aluminium smelter, starting production in 1955. The operation employs some 590 workers and contributes $224 million a year to the local economy. Electricity costs and pollution concerns are being used as justification for blocking wage claims.

The site was de-unionised in 1996 after the Rio Tinto management team had studied work practices on sites across the Tasman in New Zealand. Workers were put on individual contracts and it is only in the past two to three years that the Union has started to build up its membership, and in the past 12 months that it has begun rolling out a significant campaign.

Rio frequently plays the “oldest smelter in the country” card. “Members have told us that the company likes to use that as a threat to put fear in the workplace,” Daniel Walton says. “The inference is that if workers get too organised, push too much, the place won’t be able to function.”

It’s a scare tactic the company has also used at local and state government level in its quest for a favourably cheap electricity deal to sustain the smelter.

“The recent closure of the Rio Felix mill paper in Burnie, this is one of the largest sites in northern Tasmania,” Daniel says. “If someone in Georgetown, who’s worked at the smelter for 20 years, loses his job, there’s not much around. And the knock-on effect in the area would be huge.”

“This is a classic example,” Liam O’Brien says. “The company wants to keep a lid on wages to its own cost advantage and has a real resistance to organised labour.”
If you thought Tasmanian farms would be all about apples, you’d be wrong. One of the most lucrative crops farmed down there is salmon. Yep, salmon. So the AWU’s intrepid reporter Michael Blayney and photographer David Hahn took off to Hobart to, well, go fishing!

Something FISHY

It’s a mild spring afternoon in south-eastern Tasmania. On a small, motorised plastic boat, AWU member Shane Williams is taking great pleasure in giving our “office legs” a good workout, carving up the icy-cold waters from pen to pen on a Nubeena salmon farm. We hold on tightly to a small railing up front, thankful that today the water’s calm, the wind’s gentle, and the weather’s warm(ish).

Shane has worked this farm on the Tasman Peninsula for nine years, recently being promoted to regional manager of Tassal’s operations here. “I’ll spend less time on the water and more time on land, shuffling papers,” he says, with just a tinge of regret.

Although he’s risen through the ranks at Tassal, Shane very much values the AWU’s contribution to workers’ conditions on this site.

The farm has 33 pens, all close to the shoreline. Each one houses approximately 25,000 fish at different stages of growth in a space half the size of a cricket oval. It’s big business: Tassal is Australia’s largest Atlantic salmon producer, harvesting over 20,000 tonnes of fish a year.

Today, Shane parks beside a larger boat that will harvest roughly 20,000 Atlantic salmon by day’s end. The fish are pumped out of the pen into Peter Whalan’s safe hands on deck. “We follow strict harvest processes to ensure welfare standards are maintained and to get the best quality for eating,” he says.

Scales and tales

Today’s fish are a healthy-looking bunch, a consistent weight of approximately six kilograms and sixty centimetres in length.

The harvesting process is clinical. Peter releases live fish down a mechanical chute where they’re quickly stunned and bled out. When they land at the bottom of the chute, the catch of the day is then sorted into a holding bay nestled in the boat’s hull. From there, the bounty is destined for bellies all over the world.

We leave the harvesting behind us,
members on site. “I’m there for people when they start, offering them assistance, advice, and connecting them to the Union.”

Recently, a new state public service award was negotiated specific to the gardens. The pay scale was realigned, and John and his team’s trade status was finally recognised with a 10 per cent wage increase across the board. The outcome was so successful that Government House outdoor workers adjoining the gardens have since joined the AWU to bargain collectively for their next work agreement.

Right on track

The next morning, a new work agreement is also on the table in the break room at the picturesque Elwick Racecourse. Co-Delegate Tim Broadby and AWU Organiser Kevin Midson dispense the paperwork, ready for sign-off. “We’re pleased with what we’ve got and everyone’s happy,” Tim says. “This has been the biggest one for a long time. We put a lot of work into this agreement state-wide,” Kevin agrees. “We all stood together,"
Many of our industries are high-risk, and we’ve recently been successful with an asbestos campaign.”

Secretary Ian is rightly proud of his tight-knit staff and the state’s union heritage. “We’ve had continual growth for the past 10 years, even under Howard. The AWU in Tasmania is a strong union, a united union, and we get better outcomes as a collective,” Ian says. With total membership of approximately 25,000, Tasmania has the highest density of union membership in the country.

“One of the most important things we do for our members is health and safety,” Ian says. “Many of our industries are high-risk, and we’ve recently been successful with an asbestos campaign. We pushed hard for a prioritised removal program, and we’ve seen significant improvements on site.”

Our final stop is the Tassal salmon processing plant in Huonville. Here we reconnect with yesterday’s harvested fish, and meet with Phil Garth, AWU Delegate and Branch Executive member. A Tassal employee for nine years, Phil first worked on the production line before taking on a maintenance and groundkeeping role. “I’m happier in the job I do now,” he says, possibly because he’s not that keen on fish!

Before entering the plant, we are kitted out in white smock, gumboots, and hairnet. Inside, five large industrial ovens smoke the salmon for nine hours before it’s chilled for a further two. The fish is then skinned, trimmed, sliced and packaged. The plant is up and worked about 18 hours a day.

“We have 130 staff in processing, and four delegates take care of their needs. Last agreement, we improved our overtime rates to get time-and-a-half and double time,” Phil says. “The next EBA is set down for July, so we’re busy planning for that at the moment. It’s mostly about money this time. We have a reasonable relationship with management, so we’re hopeful our demands will be met. W
He was one of Australian cricket’s formidable team captains. Now the legendary Ian Chappell talks to Laura Macfarlane about how the *Tampa* crisis inspired him to speak out for refugee rights...

Former Australian test-cricket captain Ian Chappell was watching the infamous *Tampa* crisis unfold before him on television when he was struck by the extreme unfairness of the situation. “In cricketing parlance, it was like cheating. I felt that those people on the ship, the refugees, were being cheated out of a fair go.”

“I’m railing at the television set, and my wife, Barbara-Ann, said, ‘You know, bad things happen when good people do nothing.’ And that sort of jolted me a little bit and I thought, ‘I’m not going to do a lot of good sitting railing at the television set,’” he says.

A fateful answering-machine message Ian received a few days later galvanised him into taking action. “There was a message on the machine from Stuart McGill asking me to call him. I thought, ‘Why would Stuie be calling me? I can’t help him with his batting, or his bowling, for that matter.’ But it was another Stuart McGill asking me if I would put my name to a letter from Australia for UNHCR to help raise funds for refugees.”

Ian agreed and later received a call from Naomi Steer, the National Director of Australia for UNHCR, to thank him. But he was not content to leave it there and told Naomi that he’d like to do more.

Naomi, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary at Unions NSW, says she had been looking for someone who could speak to a broad range of Australians about the work of Australia for UNHCR and, in particular, the situation of refugees.

A few months later Naomi invited Ian to accompany her to East Timor to open a sports stadium which had been rebuilt by Australia for UNHCR and to see first hand UNHCR’s humanitarian and peace-building work in action. “That gave me an opportunity to see a situation that had caused a lot of refugees, it was disturbing to be driving along seeing houses that have been burnt or knocked to the ground and they’re just a pile of rubble,” Ian recalls.

In August 2001, the Howard Government refused permission for the *Tampa* – a Norwegian freighter carrying over 400 Afghan refugees rescued from a distressed fishing vessel – to enter Australian waters. The refugees included pregnant women, children and sick people rescued by the *Tampa* in the Indian Ocean, about 120 kilometers off remote Christmas Island. Australia then defied growing international pressure to allow the asylum seekers to land on its territory. When the *Tampa* did finally enter Australian waters, Howard ordered Australian Special Forces to intercept the ship. The debacle that followed included a string of government lies and distortions, including the allegation that adults were throwing children overboard – which was found to be untrue.

Photos: AFP/Newspix

**GREAT MATE**

He was one of Australian cricket’s formidable team captains. Now the legendary Ian Chappell talks to Laura Macfarlane about how the *Tampa* crisis inspired him to speak out for refugee rights...

He was one of Australian cricket’s formidable team captains. Now the legendary Ian Chappell talks to Laura Macfarlane about how the *Tampa* crisis inspired him to speak out for refugee rights...
Naomi says the East Timorese knew nothing about who Ian Chappell was and little about the game of cricket, but were keen to learn. “Ian launched the inaugural soccer game at the stadium but he also gave them cricket lessons,” she says. “People in these devastated communities really appreciate it when others reach out to them and sport has a way of breaking down barriers.”

Ian also joined a group called A Just Australia, and one of the first things he did was go to Canberra to lobby some of the politicians “for a better go, a fairer go for the asylum seekers”.

“Having been in a position of privilege at times in my life through being captain of Australia, you learn that you do have a slightly louder voice at times than other people. And I think that there are times when you need to use that louder voice to speak out for people who in some cases have no voice.”

Call to action

“I got the opportunity to travel because I could play cricket reasonably well,” Ian says. “And when you went overseas, you were always treated extremely well. So I thought to myself, Australians have a reputation for being welcoming, except for this black mark we’ve got with refugees. To me, it’s not the normal behaviour expected from Australians. When he joined the group, he checked with Naomi to see if it was okay because he didn’t want it to cut across what he was doing with Australia for UNHCR. “I rang Naomi and she said, ‘I haven’t got a problem with it and I’ll visit you in jail, when you’re arrested.’”

Through A Just Australia, Ian visited the Baxter detention centre, where he says there were people visiting refugees sometimes two or three times a week. “I felt embarrassed because those people were really doing something, but they said, ‘Yes, but if people like you don’t get involved more people wouldn’t be aware of what’s going on. I didn’t feel quite so embarrassed then, but even so, there a lot of people who are doing things unsung.”

After the floods in Pakistan, Naomi invited Ian to go there with her and UNHCR, but he didn’t feel comfortable about going because of the political storm that had ensued from the cricket match-fixing affair. “It blew up into a major thing and I was writing some strong opinions in the media about it and I didn’t really feel comfortable about saying, ‘I think the Pakistan cricket team should be suspended’ and then arriving there saying ‘I’m here to help’. But, later, I thought if I did go I might be giving some people an opportunity to seek retribution for me being outspoken about the match-fixing.”

Naomi says she understood Ian’s reluctance to go to Pakistan at that time. “Ian did, however, use his name to get wide coverage of UNHCR’s Pakistan appeal helping raise more than $1 million for flood victims. For the future, I’d like to go with Ian to the Indian subcontinent, where he is widely known and respected, to give the message that Australia really does care.”

Ian also says he would like to do some more work like that for Australia for UNHCR. “Cricket season is underway, so I’m really busy. But I’ll be doing more things with the UNHCR in the off-season.”

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Temperature’s Rising

Warm days make for dream vacations. But a hot working environment is no holiday. Melissa Sweet reports...

In late January 2009, temperatures began to climb in what would become known as the worst heatwave on record in Victoria. For five days, maximum temperatures were 12 to 15 degrees Celsius higher than normal over much of the state. And, as the mercury climbed, health services began to melt down thanks to a dramatic increase in calls to ambulances and presentations to emergency departments.

A subsequent Victorian government investigation of the health effects of the heatwave found there were 374 more deaths than normally would be expected between January 26 and February 1. This is significantly more than the 173 bushfire deaths of that summer that have attracted far more public attention.

The report of the investigation, titled January 2009 Heatwave in Victoria: an Assessment of Health Impacts, also found there was an almost threefold increase in patients who were dead on arrival at hospital and a template on how they can go about doing it,” he says. “We can lead from the council is good at

WHEN THE HEAT IS ON...

- Increase fluid intake.
- Susceptible people should stay in a cool or air-conditioned environment. Wear loose clothes and take frequent showers or baths.
- Reduce normal activity during hot weather. Be aware of the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
- Patients taking drugs that can potentially impede heat loss should monitor themselves by measuring their weight.
- Check on people who may be vulnerable, such as the elderly or sick.

THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER www.awu.net.au

TAKING HEAT AT WORK

After 24 years as a ganger with Hinchinbrook Shire Council at Ingham in North Queensland, Bob Gosley is used to working in the heat. But even so, he has been caught unawares. Several years ago, he was constructing a school driveway under a blazing sun. “It was bloody hot and there was no breeze,” he says. “I was sweating like a pig. I kept pushing myself. Before I realised it, everything went light-headed and I went down like a bloody barrel of shit.”

After a spell in the shade, he cooled down and recovered without needing medical help. But Bob, 61, says he’s learnt his lesson. “It was a wake-up call,” he says. “You realise that your body is telling you, ‘listen here, fella’. I won’t push myself to that degree ever again.”

Bob, an AWU Rep, says the council is good at providing staff with training about dealing with the heat, and recognising the early warning signs of heat stress, such as profuse sweating or dizziness. Staff are also encouraged to keep an eye on colleagues, particularly new arrivals to the area who may not be acclimatised.

At Townsville City Council, AWU Rep Darryl Hill says there’s good workplace support to help workers cope with heat extremes. Darryl, 48, a herbicides and pesticides sprayer, says when the 2009 heatwave hit Victoria, authorities had already been planning for such an event. As part of this work, Monash University researchers were commissioned to investigate the impact of high temperatures on rural and regional centres. Their analysis of weather data from 1990 to 2006 noted that the adverse effects of heatwaves that have been documented for large cities in Europe, America, and Australia are also relevant to rural communities.

“This adds strength to the argument...
FEATHERED FRIENDS

In the early ‘90s, young scientist Shane Maloney spent many long, hot hours observing emus in the outback. He learnt that emus are remarkable creatures that survive in wildly varying conditions, from the high snow country to the arid deserts. And they remain active under the most scorching of midday suns, while carrying a heavy cloak of dark feathers. The project investigated emus’ ability to maintain a constant body temperature in conditions ranging from minus 5 degrees Celsius to 45 degrees.

“In the middle of a summer day, nothing is active, except emus,” says Shane, who is now a professor at the University of Western Australia. (He was an AWU member years ago, when working on the wheat silos during his summer study break).

“Their thermal tolerance means they’re not limited in how long they forage; they can afford to be selective. They spend time picking the best stuff, so they don’t just fill up with anything.”

Back then, Shane may not have guessed that his emu studies would prove useful in furthering understanding of human health in heatwaves – an issue recently described in an article in the medical journal, The Lancet, as “a global public health challenge”.

“It’s an emus’ feathers that hold the key to their effective thermo-regulation. “The radiation gets absorbed quickly on the outer layers of feathers. It’s a bit like walking around with an umbrella. They’re shading themselves with their feathers,” Shane says.

立that human populations are vulnerable to heat events regardless of location, and that heat stress occurs in populations living outside large cities,” they said.

Secrets of surviving the heat involve understanding who is at risk, and targeting those groups with strategies to create environments that minimise risk.

Professor Shane Maloney from the University of Western Australia, a scientist and an expert in the effects of heat on the body, says that when the body is exposed to thermal stress, it responds by increasing sweat production, cardiac output and redirecting blood flow to the skin. These responses can, however, be impaired in elderly people or other groups such as those with chronic illness or those taking certain medications, such as diuretics. While heatstroke and coma are the most dramatic manifestation of thermal stress, the effects are wide-ranging and often not obviously attributable to heat.

A report earlier this year in the international medical journal, The Lancet, said that most heat-related deaths in wealthy countries are likely to result from cardiovascular or respiratory causes.

Prof Maloney adds, “The body’s response is dependent on the cardiovascular system. People with heart failure, anyone with compromised cardiovascular health and diabetes are at greater risk of developing heat illness.”

Mental illness, kidney disease and multiple sclerosis are also risk factors.

A 2009 study released by MS Australia found that people with the condition are reliant on air conditioning, and are estimated to spend almost 10 times more on keeping cool than the average household. Its survey called for national policies, including electricity rebates, for heat-intolerant patients. This is in line with health experts’ views that heatwave planning involve more than heat services and include supportive environments, such as access to air-conditioned public spaces like shopping centres.

Dr Carrie says heatwaves are an issue the community cannot afford to ignore. “The climate change experts say periods of extreme weather are going to become more frequent and severe,” he says.

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BIGGER PICTURE

Attention needs to be paid to tackling the underlying causes of climate change, says Fiona Armstrong, chair of the Climate and Health Alliance, which includes more than 20 health and medical organisations.

Ms Armstrong, a former chair of the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance, says many agencies are planning to try to intervene to prevent deaths during heatwaves. “Adaptation is important, but there’s too little emphasis on mitigation,” she says.

Unless we take measures to reduce emissions, our ability to adapt will be exceeded by the changes.”

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Since 1919
Committee, has been elected to a new Metalworkers Federation Executive with global unionism. "Unions have to match this new reality of working together to protect and create a new global union organisation representing 55 million workers in more than 130 countries. Union leaders from all five continents attended the conference to underline the role of the manufacturing industry – the locomotive of national economies. "Industry is the backbone for the creation of good quality jobs with decent working conditions, proper training and skills development – and respect of trade union and workers’ rights," Jyrki Raina, General Secretary of the Federation said. "Australia has a strong manufacturing and mining base, and Australian unions are an important part of our global union family. Their strong involvement in this strategic process to create a stronger counter-power to major multinational corporations is crucial." The meeting in Germany resolved to bring together three global trade union federations, with plans for the new global union grouping to hold its founding congress in 2012.

GOING GLOBAL

WITH THE global power of multinational corporations ever increasing, it is now fundamental that unions across the world find new and innovative ways of working together to protect and promote the rights of working people. AWU National Secretary Paul Howes believes that the future of unions lies in global unionism. “We live in a global market. Our employers last century may have been home-town bosses, then the more employers last century may have been home-town bosses, then the more employers last century may have been home-town bosses, then the more

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AWU National Secretary Paul Howes launched his book Confessions of a Faceless Man. The book is Paul’s darlised account through the sensational lead-up to and the outcome of the 2010 federal election. The 2010 federal election campaign had more twists, conspiracies and betrayals than a ripping political thriller and Confessions of a Faceless Man is the day-by-day account of the campaign by Paul – one of the so-called “Faceless Men”. Paul was accused of being a plotter instigating former PM Kevin Rudd’s downfall and instilling current PM Julia Gillard into the top job. Paul’s book is candid and answers many of the questions Australian voters may still be asking. But don’t think that this is a boring political memoir. It’s a laugh-out-loud and low-down account of how Labor won the 2010 federal election. Confessions of a Faceless Man is published by Melbourne University Publishing, 177pp $24.95 and is available at all good bookstores.

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE SCHEME – REMINDER!

WITH THE federal government’s new Paid Parental Leave Scheme (PPL Scheme) set to begin on January 1, 2011, now is the time for workers who are expecting babies in the new year to make their applications. The AWU is spreading the word about the new PPL Scheme to ensure that all workers are aware of their new entitlement and how to apply for it. “All workers, women especially, need to be fully aware that they will be entitled to paid parental leave from January 1, 2011,” AWU National Secretary, Paul Howes said. “It’s important that members are aware because the onus will be on workers to make an application to receive paid leave. Most employers will do the right thing by informing their staff, but some may not – or may simply be unaware of the change.” The government’s PPL Scheme benefit must be taken within 12 months after the birth or adoption of a child. Paid parental leave can be shared between eligible parents (but cannot be taken at the same time). Workers are responsible for making the application to the Family Assistance Office. Applications for a preliminary determination from the Family Assistance Office for eligibility are advised. For more important details about the new Paid Parental Leave Scheme go to www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/overview/infocus/Pages/ppl.aspx

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QUEENSLAND NEWS

DAVE SWIPES OUT FOR THE LAST TIME

DAVID WICKMANN worked at the Laminex Group’s site at Gympie for 22 years, at James Hardie for 14 years and at Bowen Council for two years, and was always an AWU member. Now, after negotiating the latest enterprise agreement at Laminex as the AWU’s Representative for 10 years, Dave Golik has handed his role over to make sure the AWU stays strong at the council.

Dave says he has enjoyed his time as a rep and took on the job because he didn’t like to see people being bullied. His father was a staunch unionist and had been involved with the bitter shearsers’ strikes in 1955, so Dave has a long family history of activity within the AWU.

He says now, “We need to do the best for our conditions. Our ancestors and grandparents fought hard to get them, and we need to make sure we hang on to them.”

CONSTRUCTION DELEGATES’ CONFERENCE

AWU DELEGATES and officials from the construction industry met in October for the AWU’s Queensland Branch Annual Construction Conference, which was bigger than last year’s inaugural meeting.

Delegates working on the Airport Link project attended after having last year been refused to do so by their employer. Thanks to the AWU’s growing strength and membership, AWU members were in a position to force permission to attend.

The conference was opened by AWU Queensland Branch Assistant Secretary Ben Swan. AWU National Secretary Paul Howes also addressed the conference, as did Assistant National Secretary Scott McDine.

AWU Delegates at the conference endorsed a number of resolutions which will set the agenda for the Queensland branch in construction in 2011.

DISABILITY SERVICES

QUEENSLAND REPS’ CONFERENCE

AWU Representatives who work as residential care officers for Disabilities Services Queensland met at their conference in late September to address the many issues facing them.

The conference was addressed by the state’s Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, Annastacia Palaszczuk, and the AWU Representatives took the opportunity to raise their concerns about the care of their clients with her directly.

The Minister thanked the Reps for their hard work and for bringing important issues to her attention.

QUEENSLAND DEPUTY PREMIER WALKS A DAY IN THE SHOES OF HOSPITAL WORKERS

QUEENSLAND Deputy Premier and Minister for Health Paul Lucas helped satisfy the tastes of almost 500 patients as a food-service worker at The Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane in September.

Paul, who took on the role as part of the Bligh Government’s “Walk A Day In My Shoes” program, worked with the team responsible for serving meals to hungry patients in two coronary wards.

“I began the morning shift at 6.30am, bidding up with Trish to do the breakfast and morning tea run for two of the coronary wards,” Paul said. “Throughout the shifts we also maintained the local kitchen, ensuring we had the right meals with us at all times and individual dietary needs were met.

“When the morning shift was done, I helped Janet on the lunch line, where I was responsible for placing the correct dessert on each tray as it came past on the conveyor belt. After lunch was served, we were on dish washer duty — working at a cracking pace and working up a sweat to stack and unstack the massive industrial dish washing machine.

“Janet and I finished our shift at 3pm and walked home to Janet’s house to end the day. It was certainly a big day – a lot of hard work. Our kitchen staff do a fantastic job and they work extremely hard. The only time we sat down was when we were on smoke or a lunch break, so I was certainly leg-weary and sore in the back yesterday afternoon.

“I really appreciated getting to know the staff and meeting the patients,” Paul said.

Paul said the state Opposition had slammed the program. “The LNP have criticised walking in the shoes of our workers because they don’t think that service and support staff count in our hospitals,” he said. “Spending the day working with Trish and Janet showed me what a vital role they perform, but how they are much appreciated by patients, families and other hospital staff alike.”

Photo: Caribbean Sunshine Tours
UNION PROTECTION FOR INJURED WORKERS A GLASS ACT

VIRIDIAN'S GLASS manufacturing plants at Ingleburn in NSW and Dandenong in Victoria have completed negotiations on a new agreement that will protect the jobs of injured workers who are off work for up to two years.

Now, regardless of whether they are injured in the workplace or suffer from a non-work-related injury, workers will have their jobs protected, thereby allowing them the recovery time needed to be able to return to work in a healthy state.

Income-protection insurance was brokered such that workers will have their wages covered for up to two years in the event of injury. Other outcomes in the agreement include an improved dispute-settlement procedure, up to an additional eight hours of personal leave for bereavement which will extend to include the deaths of nieces, nephews and grandchildren, and job-sharing for workers moving into the retirement phase of their working lives.

Ingleburn Senior Site Delegate Greg Kelly believes this is a great outcome. Greg said, “The Union Delegates and Officials worked closely together across both sites and delivered great outcomes for all members. Job protection gives peace of mind to injured workers, allowing them to recover without fear of losing their jobs. Wage increases of 12 per cent over three years also allow members to stay ahead of the inflation rate.”

AWU Greater NSW Branch Assistant Secretary Stephen Bali thanked the delegates and members for their efforts in securing a successful agreement. He said, “This agreement enhances workforce morale when manufacturing industry is under intensive competitive pressures. Viridian recognises the value of their employees and they are committed to work with injured workers to return them back to workforce at the right time.”

NSW SMELTER ENTERPRISE AGREEMENTS

TOMAGO DEAL FORGED

THE AWU NEWCASTLE Branch is pleased to confirm that the enterprise agreement for Tomago Aluminium was recently accepted by more than a 70 per cent majority.

A major accomplishment of the agreement was that AWU members are now on a single aggregate pay structure. Prior to this, workers from different sections of the plant were paid differently.

Around two-thirds of the workforce was on a wages system and the other third was on an annuised salary system which offered far better conditions, such as long-service leave being paid as worked, for example. The 2010 agreement does away with the double pay-structure system and the associated unfairness that had plagued the plant for around 10 years.

The members are now all on the same pay system and are collectively stronger for it.

The agreement also saw record wage increases of 5 per cent, 4.75 per cent, 4.5 per cent and 4 per cent over the four years of the agreement for the majority of workers. This is a significant improvement over the traditional 1 per cent that members were accustomed to.

PROVING THE POWER OF PROTECTED ACTION

After more than nine months of negotiations, the AWU has finalised an agreement with Transpacific Industrial Solutions for members working in the Hunter Valley.

Throughout the negotiations, the company refused to agree with key items on its list of claims and refused to offer any increase to wages or allowances without increased flexibility. The members voted in favour of taking protected industrial action in support of their claims and within hours of the result of the ballot being declared by Fair Work Australia the company had scheduled a series of meetings to fast-track the negotiations.

The company was actually taking any protected action, the end result was a 6 per cent wage increase back-paid from July 1 with further a per cent increases annually. The union won the inclusion of better allowances, delegates’ training leave and an improved classification structure. The outcome is a real credit to the delegates and members at TIS who showed that they are prepared to unite and fight for fair and reasonable wage increases.

The power of protected industrial action should not be underestimated, as this result shows that strong we are forced to fight for justice we can achieve great results.

NSW NEWS

NEWCASTLE NEWS

JOHN KEEN HANGS UP HIS GLOVES

THE AWU NEWCASTLE Branch sees the end of an era with the retirement of Branch President John Keen after 15 years of loyal service.

John came to the Branch after working for Tomago Aluminium, where he was the first Senior Site Delegate. His even temperament earned him respect and friends on “both sides of the fence.”

He will be missed by all Newcastle Branch officials and staff and although it is said he still has his first pay cheque, he is well known for his love of a punt and the odd twisty top.

We hope you have a long, healthy and active retirement, John, and we thank you for your contribution to this great movement and Union.

GNSW NEWS

GNSW BRANCH PULLS STRONGER TOGETHER

THE 2010 Annual Greater New South Wales Branch Conference was declared a success with guest speakers coming together on important issues under the banner: “Labour movement – stronger together”.

NSW Premier Kristina Keneally raised key differences between her government’s and the opposition’s proposals, saying the Labor government would protect workers’ and union safety rights in the workplace. She said it would maintain the Industrial Relations Commission and continue NSW’s economic record as the fastest-growing state economy in Australia.

Other conference speakers included AWU National Secretary Paul Howes, Federal Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development Mark Arbib, AWU National Occupational Health and Safety Director Yossi Berger and Socceroo legend Jim Fraser.

Greater NSW Branch Secretary Russ Collison said, “The conference offered valuable information for delegates to take back to their work sites. Often, the media gives us a distorted picture. Without thefers coming together as each delegate was able to report back to their crews after each process as each delegate was able to report back to their crews after each meeting as each delegate was able to report back to their crews after each meeting.”

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UNION WELCOMES NEW TRIO

GREATER NSW Branch has welcomed three new Officials. Eddy O’Brien is working in the construction industry; Paul Neale will be a Sydney-based coordinator; and Chris Maitland also coordinate national parks and forestry workers; and Alan Haynes, will be the Central-West Organiser based in Orange.

Greater NSW Branch Secretary Russ Collison said, “The AWU is one of the fastest-growing unions in Australia and our commitment to regional NSW remains strong. These new officials have experience and knowledge to help members and to continue the Union’s strong growth.”
GIVING DOESN'T HURT THESE BIG-HEARTED WORKERS

IT WAS 14 years ago that AWU members at OneSteel in Laverton decided they’d like to help children going through tough times – and so the Save Our Kids Fund was born. Most of the 450 AWU members at the site chip in between $2 and $5 a week which is distributed across the western suburbs.

Paul Spear, Peter Hartley and Phil Wilson recently decided it wasn’t right that the pupils at Newport Lakes Primary School should be disadvantaged because thieves had made off with their sporting equipment.

They decided to help, and made a donation to get things rolling. It’s a typical project for the Fund which has helped finance $270 young people through the Open Family Foundation’s Back to School program. Paul said the program paid for fees, books and other items to help level the playing field for students in need.

“It was a very big year – we’ve seen kids get through primary school, and we have about seven in tertiary education now,” he said. “It’s important to give back to the community and there is no better way to do that than by helping kids.”

The fund is also a supporter of the Challenge cancer charity for children, and the work of youth outreach worker Les Twentyman. As for the kids at Newport Lakes, they were overwhelmed that their plight had prompted the fund to give them a hand. “We got a lot of letters from kids, thanking us, and they were excited when we went to the school,” he said. “One little fellow said to me that they would repay us one day. I said to him if he wanted to repay us he should join the Union when he was older.”

Paul, Peter and Phil are long-term AWU members. Paul is the AWU Full-time Safety Co-ordinator working with HSRs. Phil is the Site Delegate and Peter is an HSR.

There are many AWU members and staff involved in community causes. In Portland, full-time Delegate at Alcoa, Peter King is well-known as a Bombers’ tragic. But he couldn’t say no when the local rep of the Make A Wish Foundation asked him if he would join her in the last stages of a charity walk from Melbourne to Portland. The catch was he had to wear a guernsey of this year’s premiers Collingwood. It was worth the humiliation, according to Peter, who raised $2000 for the charity and took the ribbing with good humour.

And the Industrial Department’s newest addition, Rebecca Berezat took part in a fun run to raise money for the Keyla’s Seeker Resource Centre and raised a considerable amount in the process.

This is a good chance to make a very public thank you to Claire, who organises the ball with all the professional efficiency and flair we have come to expect of her,” Cesar said.

Again, this year, there was a waiting list of people wanting to attend, so those who are invited next year should remember to respond early if they want to be part of one of the best nights of the year.

THE VICTORIAN Branch annual ball for Delegates and Health and Safety Representatives was again a spectacularly successful night this year, with a record 280 guests coming together at Melbourne’s Crown Casino.

The ball has become a high spot on the Union calendar in Victoria and attracts guests from all over the state and the country.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said the event offered an acknowledgement of the important work done by Delegates and HSRs. “We could not service our members the way we do without the fantastic contribution of these workplace Reps. They are very much part of everything we do. This is just a great way of bringing everyone together to say thanks,” he said.

This was the ball’s twelfth year and according to those close to the frizzled event organiser, the Victorian Branch’s Claire Raimondo, the number of guests has reached its upper limit.

VICTORIA NEWS

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And the Industrial Department’s newest addition, Rebecca Berezat took part in a fun run to raise money for the Keyla’s Seeker Resource Centre and raised a considerable amount in the process.

This is a good chance to make a very public thank you to Claire, who organises the ball with all the professional efficiency and flair we have come to expect of her,” Cesar said.

Again, this year, there was a waiting list of people wanting to attend, so those who are invited next year should remember to respond early if they want to be part of one of the best nights of the year.
FRONTLINE NEWS VICTORIA

FAIR WORK VICTORY

THE AWU had a win in Fair Work Australia (FWA) on an important matter of principle which could see some of our members at Alcoa Australia Rolled Products repay money deducted from their wages over industrial action in September 2009.

The issue was that the company deducted money proportionately from pay packets of AWU members, but was found not to have properly notified many workers of those deductions.

There were also complex issues around an overtime ban which FWA said could not be considered a partial work ban. The case was highly technical and the final outcome for the Alcoa employees in question is yet to be determined, but it has drawn a line in the sand over how workers are informed of deductions for partial work bans.

Industrial Officer Patrick Reilly said the case had been well-fought and well worth the long hours in preparing it.

“I think everyone acknowledges the importance of pushing for interpretations of provisions of the Fair Work Act. It is still early days for legislation and pretty much every decision is significant at the moment,” Patrick said.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said the Branch would continue to test the new Fair Work laws when the opportunity arose.

“We must continue to pursue decisions that help clarify the meaning of the Act if we are to get the best outcomes for our members.”

“I am very proud of our Industrial Department which has been responsible for a number of important cases, including the first majority support determination,” Cesar said.

RECORD DEAL FOR BASS STRAIT

The AWU Victorian Branch has negotiated a record-breaking greenfields agreement for workers on the construction of the $5 billion Kipper Tuna Turrum (KTT) gas project in Bass Strait.

Organiser Terry Lee, who negotiated the agreement, has spent the past 20 years looking after the interests of AWU members in Bass Strait. He said this is the biggest investment he has seen during that time.

“We’ll have about 400 AWU members on the project over the next two years, and they’ll be on an agreement that has some significant initiatives for offshore workers,” Terry said.

The agreement sees a 6 per cent increase on wages and allowances, including shift loading, from the last increase on wages and allowances, including shift loading, from the last agreement, has spent the past 20 years looking after the interests of AWU members in Bass Strait. He said this is the biggest investment he has seen during that time.

The introduction of a construction disability, or site allowance of $7.90 per hour worked, is a first.

“The overall uplift from the Henry Project which was completed not all that long ago, is in excess of 30 per cent. This is tough, demanding and isolated work for which our members deserve the rewards they will be getting,” Terry said.

Increasingly, international standards of accommodation for offshore workers are for one person to a room with private facilities. There will be four to a room on KTT, with communal bathrooms, for which the agreement allows a $90 a day ‘hard lying’ allowance.

“This allowance is a first, but it is appropriate. It is not a great environment for sleep and relaxation to start off with. Having so many people in a room and having to share everything does make life more difficult,” he said.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said the agreement was the latest in a long line of achievements for AWU members.

“Over the past 20 years he has consistently delivered outstanding outcomes in Bass Strait through a combination of his deep understanding of the industry and the issues, and his commitment to the role the AWU plays in the life of its members,” Cesar said.

KTT is a joint BHP, Esso and Santos project, and one of the largest domestic gas developments on the eastern seaboard.

AWU construction members will perform a range of tasks from laying 80km of pipe, to installing platforms, doing hook-ups and building bridges between platforms and topsides.

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THEDATE

Hunternextyear.

After being subject to the wrath of the Howard regime’s workplace relations laws, BAE Systems workers have now come off their AWAs and are ready to bargain for a collective agreement with the Union’s support. The Newcastle Branch has been working on organising BAE Systems workers for several years and has developed a national campaign to organise them so they can start bargaining to formulate their own collective agreement. WA Branch Growth and Campaign Organiser Matt Dixon and Aviation Organiser Mahmut Mellick, have been talking with workers about formulating their own collective agreement.

The WA Branch is now in a position where its membership has grown to 65 per cent. It has two elected Delegates and the workforce is now reading up on other BAE Systems agreements from around the world to try and formulate the one they are entitled to when bargaining commences early next year.

FRONTLINE NEWS SOUTH AUSTRALIA/ WEST AUSTRALIA

AGREEMENT CEMENTED AT AUSTRAL BRICKS

AFTER THEIR last enterprise agreement expired in 2006 and the company refused to negotiate another, workers at Austral Bricks took up the fight to recover their basic rights and entitlements to agree an EBA that covered the whole of its workforce.

Austral argued that employees were happy on Australian Workplace Agreements and did not want an EBA. Up to this point only employees who would sign an AWA or individual contract would get a pay rise and those who chose to remain on the EBA during the period from 2006 and 2010 did not receive such an outcome.

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WEST AUSTRALIA NEWS

WORKERS UNITE TO TAKE ON BAE

THE AWU’s WA Branch has been working closely with the Newcastle Branch and National Aviation Organiser Liam O’Brien to win a better deal for BAE Systems workers around Australia.

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GUNNS JOBS ARE STILL IN DOUBT

THE AWU Western Australian Branch is concerned that if the Gunns Timbers operation closes its Deanmill and Manjimup operations, it will represent the death of another south-west timber town.

Earlier this month, Gunns Timber announced it would be closing its Deanmill operation in November, if a potential buyer could not be found.

“If these operations close, more than 100 AWU members will lose their jobs,” South-West Organiser Craig Ramirez said.

“While some workers can be absorbed by other local industries, such as fruit and vegetable growing around Manjimup, many will be forced to leave the region to find work”, he added. “I’ve spoken to a couple of guys on Friday and they’re saying that a lot of the younger people are just going to have to leave, they’re not going to have any other choice.”

The AWU is still hoping a buyer will come through at the last moment and save Gunns’ operations, but the Union is still preparing to do everything it can’t to protect the entitlements of its members and seek opportunities for re-employment.
TASMANIA NEWS

AWU RECOGNISED FOR OHS CAMPAIGNING

TASMANIAN MINISTER for Workplace Relations David O’Byrne praised the important contribution AWU Tasmanian Branch Secretary Ian Wakefield has made to workplace safety in that state. Ian was named the winner of the Best Individual Contribution to Workplace Health and Safety in an annual event. The Minister said, “I’ve known Ian for many years and I was particularly pleased that the award recognised Ian’s work in representing working families by ensuring they get the pay, conditions, safety and respect that they deserve.”

The award acknowledged Ian’s outstanding contribution to continuing improvement of occupational health and safety standards for workers across Tasmania. Ian has also been instrumental in leading efforts in the state to create legislation that recognises the issues of hours of work, shiftwork and fatigue, mining safety and the risks associated with asbestos.

The awards recognise businesses, organisations or individuals who lead the way in workplace health and safety.

AGREEMENTS FLOW AT SOUTHERN WATER

THE AWU Tasmanian Branch and a number of other unions have concluded negotiations in October for an enterprise agreement with Southern Water, the water authority set up by the island’s state government to take control of water infrastructure in the south of Tasmania in 2009.

AWU members from various southern councils were moved across to the new authority under their previous conditions in July 2009, and a new agreement was needed to cover all employees.

The AWU and other unions negotiated for over 18 months to achieve an agreement that provides pay parity for all employees over the life of the agreement and for no overall disadvantage to workers from the previous council conditions. Specific changes included an improvement to on-call rates, increased HSM allowance and redundancy provisions for some AWU members, improved dirt money and a contractor’s clause to protect against the contracting out of their jobs.

The AWU and other unions applied for a protected industrial action ballot in mid-2010, and also participated in a rally on Parliament House lawns in pursuit of members’ claims. Industrial action was averted because negotiations became more positive for AWU members after their rally in Hobart.

Thanks goes to AWU Delegates Garth Hennessy, Allan Wright, Aaron Whitehill, David Tatnell and Marcus O’Rielly for their commitment throughout the long negotiation period.

HOBBIT CITY COUNCIL SIGNS OFF

THE TASMANIAN Branch finalised its 2010 enterprise agreement negotiations with the Hobart City Council in July. Members voted to agree to an average pay increase of 4 per cent from July 2010, and a further increase of 3.75 per cent in July 2011. Other improvements included a rise in the pay-out of sick leave up to 17.5 per cent, an increase on all allowances and a review of the classification structure during the life of the EBA to reflect better duties.

FIRE-LINE ALLOWANCE FOR DEC FIRE-FIGHTERS

The AWU WA Branch is proud to represent WA Department of Environment and Conservation frontline fire-fighters who work under the inadequate job title of “conservation employees”. AWU fire-fighters battle some 500 wildfires every year across the state. In addition to wildfire suppression, there is an annual prescribed burning target of 200,000 hectares to minimise the risk and intensity of wildfires. AWU fire-fighters often work extended shifts at times in excess of 24 hours in extreme conditions.

After extensive negotiations between the Union and DEC, agreement has been reached for a new fire services agreement. It extends the fire-line allowance to prescribed burning and will be back-dated to July 1. The allowance of $6.50 per hour applies to all fires wildfire and prescribed burning and will also be increased automatically every year in line with the WA IR Commission decision.

“This has been a hard-fought result from our AWU members,” WA Branch Organiser Mike Zoetbrood said. “This is a significant win for AWU fire-fighters and a step in the right direction. The services agreement expires in September 2011, at which time the Union will continue the struggle for terms that properly reflect the work undertaken by AWU members,” he said. “It is only through the resolve and strength of the AWU membership that further improvements to the pay and conditions of this group of brave fire-fighters will be achieved.”

AWU members at Alcoa’s Pinjarra refinery take their message to the streets during their tough negotiations.

THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER – ON THE MARCH IN PINJARRA

More than 600 workers at one of Alcoa’s largest worksites in Australia, Western Australia’s Pinjarra Refinery, have been locked into tough pay negotiations for over 12 months. And another 350 Alcoa workers at the Wagerup refinery, Kwinana refinery, Willowdale mine and Hurnty mine – known as the Combined Sites – are also in negotiations for well over 12 months.

The big issue for all the Alcoa workforce is job security as the aluminium industry faces new global competitive pressures. The workers are concerned about protecting their work-family balance as many of them are involved in shift work which impacts on their family life.

The AWU membership has fought to protect and maintain their wages throughout the devastating WorkChoices years. Now the membership are concerned that Alcoa wants to contract out some of their work, to create a second tier workforce of relatively low paid workers. An active workplace structure of Union delegates have represented the voice of the AWU workforce at Alcoa throughout the current dispute. Union members have been involved in a series of industrial stoppages as part of the on-going campaign.

As The Australian Worker goes to press negotiations continue – but the Union is hoping to achieve a great result just in time for Christmas.

Turn to page 10 for a report on the aluminium industry in Australia.
started working with the Union in October as the National Training and Education Coordinator, based in Sydney. It’s been an exciting period, as my learning is being fashioned to fit with the skills and knowledge that I carry with me coming from New Zealand. That has been rewarding, and my enthusiasm has grown steadily since I have been here. It was an eye-opener when I left the service. The SFWU proved a change from my previous job. I came from a government department which housed the occupational health and safety services, the immigration service, the Labour Inspectorate, and mediation services. For the first time I was on site before then. The SFWU was already in place. I got support from the AWU during it all. Our Organiser, Paul Delaney, was with us for every meeting before we started negotiations. We had great support from the AWU. It was an eye-opener when I left the mediation service to go to a union. Suddenly, I had gone from a bureaucratic, hours being cut back, pay discrepancies, and sometimes collective bargaining being stalled by employers.

It was quite a change. Throughout my working career, I’d also volunteered with an adult literacy organisation that delivers programs to students one-to-one, in groups and out in the workplace. Here, I trained as a tutor to help students delivering learning programs that met their immediate needs. The word “literacy” encompasses a lot, really, and more than just the basic needs of reading and writing. Sometimes, it was about comprehending things in people’s everyday lives, such as reading bank statements, or signs, or things around their workplace that some may have taken for granted.

The SFWU national program. I could see the potential in training and education, but run through a national program. I could see the potential in training and education, and fortunately the people I worked for could see the potential in me. I embraced both roles and absolutely loved it.

The SFWU proved a change from my previous job. I came from a government department which housed the occupational health and safety services, the immigration service, the Labour Inspectorate, and mediation services. I worked for mediation services as workplace coordinator. The vast range of cases that came through concerned unjustified dismissals or disadvantage in the workplace, by way of bullying, hours being cut back, pay discrepancies, and sometimes collective bargaining being stalled by employers.

Sometimes, it was about comprehending things in people’s everyday lives, such as reading bank statements, or signs, or things around their workplace that some may have taken for granted.

When I felt it was time for another change, I researched where I wanted to go. I knew I wanted to stay in the union movement, and be somewhere I was proud to be associated with. The AWU ticked all the boxes. I would find it impossible to work anywhere that did not have principles aimed at working towards a fairer, more just society. It would be a hollow existence to put all your effort into something that was at odds with your own ethics.

I THINK A LOT OF WHO YOU ARE IS TO do with where you come from, and how you were brought up. I’m the youngest of five children and was born in Whakatane, a coastal town in the Bay Of Plenty. Our parents were hard workers and while we were not a political family, I would say we were a very moral one. Fairness and decency were the bedrocks of our values. My father worked in a sawmill, then a local pharmacy, then moved into hospitality. Mum was a cook, working sometimes up to three jobs, and still the family together.

The AWU is incredibly supportive and responsive to ideas. It is exciting to be in a job where people are so honest and open, and willing to talk about ideas. I’m looking forward to the projects already on the drawing board, particularly those relating to Delegate development. In its 50 years’ time, I imagine I will still be in the union movement. I can’t imagine being anywhere else. My immediate future is full of challenge, which I love.

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When it came to our new contracts, I thought we really needed some help to lay the law down. We got the right help, that’s for sure. IT’S GOOD BEING A DELEGATE, BUT IT can be hard work. I do my normal job but then I’m in the office if there is any sort of issue. The negotiations for the new agreement were good, too. It is difficult to please everyone; you can’t, and sometimes people complain. But overall, I’d say to anyone that they should become a Delegate, I’d recommend it.

My father and mother came to Australia from Macedonia. They settled in Newcastle from the beginning. I was born here. My father has worked at BHP for 38 years. He has worked very, very hard for his family, to provide his kids with a good future. He worked too much. I have a two-and-a-half-year-old son, Alexander. My wife Anna is at home with him. I want to make sure I spend time with them, as I saw my father work too much.

The site I work at makes mining machinery, front-end loaders and personnel carriers. I came from the motor vehicle industry about two years ago, and where I was there was no active union. Things have definitely improved since the AWU got involved here. And I think you do learn new skills as a Delegate, and you feel better that you are standing up and doing something.
Run only to benefit members

Super is about saving. So it makes sense to be with a fund like AustralianSuper that is run only to benefit members, doesn’t pay dividends to shareholders or commissions to agents, and has low fees.

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Put us to work for you. Call 1300 300 273 or go to www.australiansuper.com

Workers’ rights

I’m concerned about the entitlements of workers being lost when companies shut down or fall into bankruptcy. Will your government look into raising the stakes when it comes to workers’ financial entitlements in these situations? Brett Noonan, Vic

The PM: The Government believes workers should be protected when they are made redundant. That’s why the National Employment Standards contain a minimum standard of between 4-12 weeks redundancy pay depending on an employee’s years of service. This is based on what the Australian Industrial Relations Commission decided was a fair safety net in 2004. The Government also committed at the election to replace the existing General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme (GEERS) with an improved Fair Entitlements Guarantee. GEERS is a payment scheme which provides basic payments when workers lose their employment after their employer goes into liquidation or bankruptcy. Under the Guarantee, the existing cap on 16 weeks’ redundancy pay will be removed and workers will be eligible for 4 weeks’ redundancy pay per year of service.

Closing the gap

Will your government commit to improving health and health outcomes for Indigenous Australians? Moreover, will your Government provide support by enhancing the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce and give the same recognition that is given to other professional groups? The Torres Strait Northern Peninsula Area region has the greatest prevalence of diabetes in the world. Will your Government provide additional resources to assist in addressing and ensuring positive health outcomes?

Also, the lack of a border between Australia and Papua New Guinea impacts on Torres Strait Northern Peninsula Health Services. Workers have been obliged to provide healthcare to Papua New Guineans based on humanitarian grounds (this is illegal). This impacts other government agencies – Immigration, Customs, Education and AQIS (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service). Are there plans to resolve this issue? Stephen Christian, Qld

The PM: My Government is pursuing an agenda to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. This includes undertaking major reform and delivering investment in early education, health, jobs, housing and services, and infrastructure. We are committing over $580m over four years from 2009-10 to target chronic disease, including diabetes and risk factors. A new workforce of 670 positions is being funded nationally. We also launched a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association earlier this year. From 1 July 2012, national registration will be required of qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, including Aboriginal Health Workers. The Government is working with the PNG Government to strengthen its national health system over the long term. The Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee (HIC) is providing funding worth $5m for the cost of health professionals moving between Torres Strait and the South Fly coast of PNG. The Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy provides $13.8m to address current health concerns in the Torres Strait.

The bigger picture

I’d like to know why MPs and Senators in Opposition parties feel obliged to oppose everything, even if it’s in the national interest not to do so? Will your Government encourage bi-partisan support for issues that are essential to the national interest? Lauren Catechin, Vic

The PM: People often raise this concern. And yes, on many policy issues, and for many of our nation-building programs, we don’t share the views or the approach that the Opposition would prefer us to take. However, there are occasions when political parties do agree. The Apology to Australia’s Indigenous people in 2008 is an example. But it happens in policy areas as well. In the last Parliament, the Opposition supported our legislation ensuring that all young people complete Year 10 and remain in school, training or work until they are 17. Before we came to Government there were times when the ALP also supported legislation. However cooperation, delivering results in the national interest, rarely makes headlines.

AWU members had some questions for our PM – and she was pleased to respond...

A CHAT WITH
When West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price’s wife Melanie delivered triplet girls five years ago, the couple’s life was turned upside down. Consider the evidence: in previous issues of The Australian Worker, we’ve shared the private passions of AWU Branch Secretaries far and wide. Now South Wales honcho Russ Collison shared his cook’s secret with an award-winning batch of scones, Victoria’s Cesar Melhem knocked up a bowl of tabouli salad that we all wanted to dive into, South Australia’s Wayne Hanson popped a cork in his enviable wine cellar, and Tasmania’s Ian Wakefield took to the water to find the catch of the day. So what passion does Stephen like to explore come the weekend? Naturally, he spends quality time with his family.

“I sound pretty boring when you put it that way,” Stephen says, laughing. “But it might be because I’m a bit younger than the other guys. I don’t think many of them have a young family like I do.”

As proud Dad of four girls, seven-year-old Abbey and five-year-old triplets Erin, Rani and Tia, 40-year-old Stephen tries to devote all of his non-working hours to the well-being of the quartet. When he’s not listening to the girls read and supervising homework of an evening, he’s busy shuffling the girls to and from gymnastics and swimming engagements. The three youngest have also recently taken up AFL Auskick with Stephen the designated driver and coach. Fortunately he has a passion for football.

“I love AFL,” Stephen says. “I was a keen player when I was younger and fitter, and I follow both Perth teams in the comp.”

Holidays are spent in the south-west of the state at Busselton with all four girls. Steve, a keen on swimming and boogie boarding. “When we’re at home in Perth, we live near the Beach, so we like to go there when the weather’s good.”

All four of Stephen and Melanie’s daughters were assisted by the IVF program, and the arrival of the triplets wasn’t entirely unexpected. “We definitely knew that a multiple birth was a possibility with IVF, so it didn’t come as a shock when it happened. When we had Abbey, we were told there was a possibility of four, but we got just the one. When we had triplets, we were told three, and we got the three.”

Nevertheless, adjusting to three in one hit took plenty of preparation. Even though the couple were informed of the triple treat seven weeks into the pregnancy, the usual logistical problems weighed heavily on their minds before the birth.

“With Abbey it was relatively easy, but with the triplets we needed three of everything; three cots, three seats for the car, and we had to look at getting a new car to fit everyone in. It wasn’t cheap, and feeding time was a frenzy.”

For those in similar situations, Stephen believes that sticking to a routine is the key to successful parenting. Even with that routine in place, it took at least a month before the household returned to “normal” after the births, “If I could offer any advice it would be to control your kids and don’t let them control you,” he says.

Now, with family in tow, Stephen looks back at life before kids and can’t quite believe where he is now. “We used to be double income before the kids arrived so that was a big change. We also did things when we wanted to in those days. We used to do a lot more travelling around the state, mostly down south around Margaret River.”

Even so, he wouldn’t change a thing about his life. So, any chance of shooting one more time for that elusive boy?

“No, no more mate. I’m done.”
Sometimes someone will say “enough”. William Cooper, an Indigenous Australian and one-time AWU member, cared about others suffering in a hostile world...

In the 1870s, missionary Daniel Matthews would often paddle along the Murray River in a canoe. Along the way, the Englishman would meet Aborigines who’d lost their land. With his own mission in Echuca, he’d offer to take in these displaced persons. William Cooper became one of them.

His mother took up Matthews’ offer, so William learnt to read and write at the mission. Education was an important part of this environment and the youngster – armed with literacy skills – also studied the justice system and how to campaign on political issues. This was to prove pivotal in shaping William Cooper’s life. He was a gentle man who appealed to people on basic humanitarian grounds.

William Cooper’s contribution has been recognised in Australia. In 1988, as part of the bicentenary celebrations, he was named as one of the 100 greatest Australians. This year, the Victorian government backed the naming of a William Cooper Footbridge in Footscray and the William Cooper Justice Centre in Melbourne. Additionally, books such as Blood From a Stone: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines’ League, edited by Andrew Markus and Bain Attwood (Monash University, 2004) have helped highlight his achievements. It was a line William Cooper often used. “He’d often say, ‘if only you’d think Black you’d understand us more’,” Russell recalls.

Plans are afoot to buy the Footscray house that William resided in. The vision is to create a museum that educates about racism. Kevin Russell, one of the people behind the plan, says it’s a place where it’s hoped William’s name will be remembered forever.

— Lisa Anderson

**ISRAEL HONOURS WILLIAM COOPER**

Like the union movement, William’s humanitarianism had a global perspective. In 1938, an elderly Cooper lead an unprecedented yet peaceful delegation to Melbourne’s German consulate to protest Kristallnacht – a night of state-sponsored violence towards Jewish people in Germany which resulted in over 90 dead and tens of thousands sent to ghastly concentration camps.

The delegation’s petition slammed Kristallnacht’s “cruel persecution”, but it was rejected by the consulate. However, a journalist – astutely brought along by William Cooper – wrote about the protest in The Argus newspaper. Years later, Israeli historians uncovered this news – believed to be the only private protest against Germany in the wake of Kristallnacht – which led to a friendship between the two countries.

This year, in honour of William Cooper, a “chair” dedicated to studying resistance during the Holocaust will be formalised at Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum. And at the Australia-Israel Friendship Forest near the Martyrs Forest near Jerusalem, trees have been planted in his honour. Kevin Russell recalls that emotional day in 2009. “The Australian ambassador spoke [at the Martyrs Forest] about how ashamed he felt that it fell to one of Australia’s dispossessed non-citizens to make a stance against Nazism. When he said those words, it really sunk in.”

**FAMILY LEGACY**: Holocaust survivor Hemi Korn (left), with Ali Tumer (right), one of William Cooper’s grandsons.

**PHOTOS**: DAVID HAHN, Aidan Ormond
Simple super answers for busy women

As a woman, your life is already filled with all sorts of matters. But that doesn’t mean you don’t care about your super. To get super answers fast – and find out more about the issues that affect women and super, here’s the place for you:

www.womenandsuper.com.au
WHEN did I start needing subtitles for life? Oh yes, that’s right... it would have been about the same time I signed up for Twitter.

For those lucky few who do not know what that is, it’s a brief messaging system on the internet that allows you to broadcast your opinion to the world in 140 characters or less.

But never has a medium been so appropriately named. Twitter is full of twits. They’re all there, writing vacuous captions on life for the hard-of-thinking.

In the Victorian era, they used to charge people to tour asylums to laugh at the mentally ill. Now we just open a Twitter account instead.

Keyboard warriors pick fights with people they’d run away from in real life, celebrities write down stuff they should only say in private and journos lap up the easy stories...while everyone else simply tries to king hit each other with crude putdowns instead of intelligent debate.

It’s not quite the information superhighway we were promised, is it? Then again though, where IS my “Holden Hovercar by the year 2000”, dammit? But that’s the intra-web-by-box-of-lights-that-plugs-into-the-wall-and-delivers-the-world for you. Once upon a time, it was nice and simple – you went on the Net for porn and... actually, no, that’s about all you went on there for. Now it’s impossible to live without it. And it’s everywhere. (The Internet, that is. Not porn. That’s all been downloaded onto the PC of a 14-year-old boy in Warrnambool.

I know it’s laughable now, but I remember a time when you used to make phone calls on your mobile. And that was considered cutting edge... Now they seem to do everything but make calls.

I asked Mrs Grumpy what the weather was like the other day and instead of looking out the window, she looked for her phone, tapped the screen, checked a radar, looked at the synoptic chart, mapped out the rising barometric pressures vs decreasing humidity, measured the rainfall since 9am, changed the range on her radar, switched to the doppler reading, looked at the five-day forecast then proudly told me: “It’s sunny.” Thanks. For. That.

Throw in Facebook, YouTube, Gmail etc etc... and the world these days is only about weather apps and cats playing pianos. While someone criticizes the cats for doing it poorly. While someone else sends around fake naked pics of the cat in its pre-piano days.

While someone else gets the wrong end of the stick entirely, thinks it’s paw-nography, brands everyone else a pianophile beast and raises a lynch mob, backed by radio shock-jocks, conservative commentators and the rabid newsrooms of Australia’s right-wing press.

This is our modern multimedia life. You know what? I was already multimedia before the internet was invented. In those days though, it was called real life. You could see, hear, touch, taste, feel the world around you.

I kinda miss it...oh HANG ON, is that two cats DRESSED UP like PRINCE WILLIAM and KATE MIDDLETON on their WEDDING DAY?! HOWWWWW SWEEEEEEEEEETTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT!

RETWEET RETWEET FWD: EEEEEK!
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