

**CWU (T&S) Vic**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2016**

**JOHN ELLERY SECRETARY**

**COMMUNICATION WORKERS UNION  
TELECOMMUNICATION  
& SERVICES BRANCH  
VICTORIA**



# ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS 2016

Once again, it is a privilege to present the 2016 Branch Secretary's report to Victorian T&S members. After a pessimistic outlook in last year's report I don't think there is much change to that outlook in the short term. We have now reached a point where the agenda of other parts of the CEPU (including the CWU Divisional Office and the National CEPU) is plainly obvious – there is a serious threat to the ongoing existence of the Victorian T&S Branch. The threats that I predicted in last year's report have quickly come to fruition, and the Branch has gone through a very difficult time, post the August 2015 union election change of leadership at the Divisional level.



**JOHN ELLERY**  
Secretary

## BRANCH PERSONNEL

The ongoing focus on keeping the Branch financially afloat has meant further changes in personnel over the last financial year. In August last year, our part time Industrial officer Len Cooper's position was made redundant (after a year of service in his part time industrial officer role), and Len finished up.

Lesley Robson's work as a fixed term recruiter has finished, and she has not been replaced, due to financial constraints.

Prior to the end of the financial year, the admin position of our long-serving employee, Trish Willoughby, was declared surplus by the Branch Committee of Management (BCOM). However, both the CEPU National Council and our Divisional Office decided they would launch Federal Court action to halt the retrenchment process. The matter was the subject of a decision by Justice Jessup of the Federal court on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2016. In summarising a complicated judgement, the Branch Committee of Management's decision to declare the position redundant has been upheld, and the outcome will be the equivalent of Telstra redundancy outcome – this was opposed by our Divisional office, but upheld by the Federal Court. However, the responsibility for which part of the Union pays out the redundancy arrangement still is subject to further discussions. We have been restrained in using the investment fund (which in the main came from the sale of the Cromwell St Collingwood building), however the matter, at the time of writing, still remains unresolved. This is a disgraceful way of treating any employee, let alone one of our own, and Trish's resilience during this messy time is to be congratulated.

Our honorary Branch President, Len Cooper, also decided that he would vacate the Branch President position, having been in the Branch President for around a year. The Branch President's position has been filled by former Vice President, Roger Bland. We thank Roger for his commitment.

## BRANCH FINANCIAL SITUATION

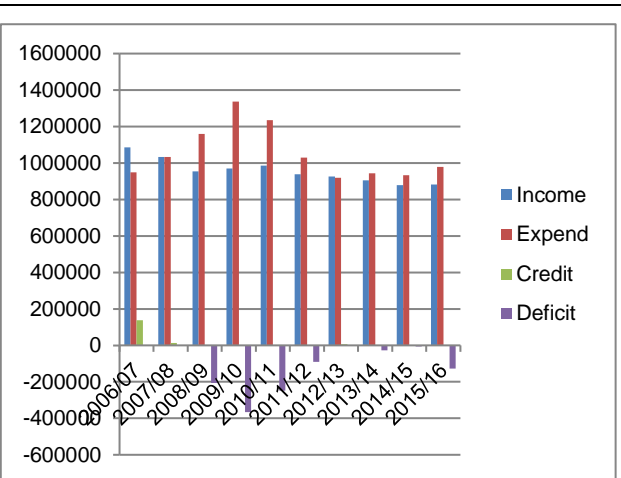
The Branch Committee of Management and the Branch officers continue to manage the Branch to a point where the matching of the service levels to members, and the costs associated with that (ie mainly labour costs) are balanced carefully. The added constraints of operating as a Registered Organisation under the RO Act, has added a significant bureaucratic impost on this small Branch.

All of our remaining officials and admin staff (Sue, Sharon and myself) are very mindful of the financial situation, and the resulting link to declining Branch numbers.

No doubt, over the next 12 months, we will have to closely match the wage costs to membership income. Clearly, a more flexible method of working will continue for some time into the future (eg reduced hours, etc), as we have basically exhausted other methods of reducing costs. Provided we are not frustrated further by external parties, the Branch should be financially viable in the foreseeable future. In fact this year's financial results reflect the inclusion of Trish's retrenchment package, even though it has not been paid out yet. If we are to remove that amount our deficit would be of the order of last year's amount.

This year, we have managed to limit the losses sustained by the Branch, and look forward to a financially better outcome in the 2016/2017 financial year, however, the legal costs associated with the unwarranted, wasteful and politically motivated intervention by both the Division and the National CEPU will cost a significant amount of Members' funds. No doubt the Branch Membership will make their own judgement about these actions.

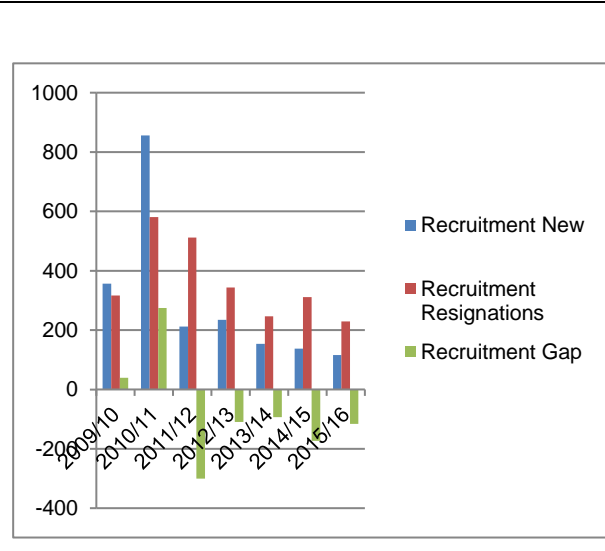
Financial Situation				
Year	Income	Expend	Credit	Deficit
2009/10	970610	1336287		-365677
2010/11	985477	1234362		-248885
2011/12	938522	1028809		-90287
2012/13	925793	919687	5471	
2013/14	904280	944154		-26566
2014/15	878189	932843		-6133
2015/16	882490	979390		-96900



**RECRUITING OUTCOMES/BRANCH NUMBERS**

Recruiting has taken a bit of a “back seat” over the last year, as we have, quite frankly, been sidetracked with attacks from other areas of the Union. We seem to be recruiting more on an ad hoc “issues” based arrangement rather than a co-ordinated plan – we simply haven’t got the resources that we previously had to focus on this major issue of longevity of the Branch.

Recruitment			
Year	New	Resignations	Gap
2009/10	356	317	39
2010/11	856	581	275
2011/12	212	512	-300
2012/13	235	344	-109
2013/14	154	247	-93
2014/15	138	311	-173
2015/16	116	229	-116



<b>Membership</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Financial</b>
2009/10	2456	1963
2010/11	2749	2607
2011/12	2389	2181
2012/13	2249	2156
2013/14	2187	2008
2014/15	1935	1846
2015/16	1835	1740

Year	Total	Financial
2009/10	2456	1963
2010/11	2749	2607
2011/12	2389	2181
2012/13	2249	2156
2013/14	2187	2008
2014/15	1935	1846
2015/16	1835	1740

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS**

### **ESTA**

We continue to make significant good progress in the ESTA (Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority) area, which handles the call taking and dispatch of Emergency Services Organisations (particularly Police). Ongoing issues arising from EBA interpretation tend to be our forte. We still see significant numbers of current members (around 250), from this area, and we have upped the representation at BCOM for this group.

### **TELSTRA**

Telstra employment numbers still continue to decline, particularly under this current CEO, Andy Penn. The unsatisfactory EBA from November last year continues to dog us, and some of the clauses including forced redeployment, are significant concerns. The critical issues of offshoring and contracting out permanent jobs, across many areas, is placing significant pressure on the ongoing strength of the Branch, and across Australia, the number of unionised telco workers is declining rapidly. As an example, the published membership of telco members in our Comms Division Branches across Australia is now around 6500, a long way from the “glory days”. It is clear that in order to appropriately look after the industrial interests of our Telco members, significant changes have to be made in the structure of the CEPU Communications Division.

### **AUSTRALIA POST**

Our Australia Post techs are confronted with further changes to their current shift and staffing arrangements, as a result of new equipment, and further cost cutting in the Mails (Red Post) areas. The Parcels (Blue Post) areas are also dealing with the installation of some unsatisfactory new automated sorting equipment that will create further friction with the management.

### **VISIONSTREAM**

Visionstream is becoming a large player in the industry, having gobbled up Silcar Telepower, Silcar Communications, and a number of other smaller players. It has a different management approach, and a number of the smaller EBAs are attempted to be “harmonised” with the Visionstream Fieldwork Agreement. For our ex Silcar (Comms and Telepower) members, this means possible changes to their current wages and conditions. Both EBA’s are currently stalled, with the Telepower Agreement having been voted down by the staff.

## **NBN Co**

NBN Co are showing a liking towards the discredited pyramid sub-contracting employment model being favoured by Telstra at the moment. We have had limited impact in the NBN Co areas, and it would appear that a preference for ex Optus staff and vendor staff is apparent, particularly in the higher level technical areas. This is one area where the Union needs to focus its efforts.

## **ISGM AND SUPPOSED “INDEPENDENT” SUB CONTRACTORS**

The Branch has made some inroads into this area, however progress is slow, due to the intentional, sham way these staff are engaged. There is clearly a plan by the “big end of town” (and the various employer organisations) to tear up employment arrangements as we know it, and replace them with an exploitable, frightened workforce that is controlled by KPI's and potential fines. The employment model is a disgrace, and clearly is endorsed by the current conservative government. This is “WorkChoices” by stealth, and in fact, could be argued as unlawful, however the lawyers will be rubbing their hands together on – the only winners in a this environment will be the employers and their lawyers.

## **OTHER SMALLER COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY EMPLOYERS**

As previously reported, a number of smaller employers have negotiated EBA's with the Union, less so in this financial year. It would appear that the state of the Communications Industry is in turmoil, and will remain so for the foreseeable future, particularly as Telstra vacates the network that it is handing over to the NBN Co.

## **CAMPAIGNS AND INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATIONS ON ISSUES**

- Representation of Telstra, ESTA, Optus, Australia Post, NBN Co, Visionstream, Aegis, Vodafone, ISGM, BDS, BSA, contractors and sub-contractor members on various issues i.e. grading levels, relocation, leave, OH&S issues, workers' compensation issues, PICMs, bullying, unfair dismissal, over/under payments, public holidays, unpaid invoices, and auto dispatch.
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreements:   ESTA  
  Telstra  
  Alcatel-Lucent (ongoing negotiations)
- Guidance and advice to CWU Members and potential members on a wide range of matters.
- Protection of RDOs.
- Telstra Exchanges: health & safety issues.
- Redundancies and redundancy associated matters.
- Sub-contractor issues.

## **WHAT'S FOR THE FUTURE?**

The prediction in last year's annual report, has, in my view, become reality.

I believe the basic Union mantra of Membership service in everything we do is not apparent across the Division. We occupy an unusual position of being an organisation that has members that cross many political divides, and, at the same time, attempt to provide a collective outcome for all members. The current climate in the Communications Division is, quite frankly, not in accordance with the best interests of the members.

## **THANKS TO BRANCH OFFICE STAFF**

Once again, the work of the long serving Branch office staff has been the glue that welds the Union together.

My thanks are again recorded to Sharon Benson and Trish Willoughby, our office admin staff, and to Len Cooper and Sue Riley, our industrial staff, who have done quality work in representing members across all employers. I also wish to recognise the work of our recruiter Lesley Robson, who finished up last year. Lesley has managed to find a full time regional organiser position with the Health Workers Union.

My thanks also to Branch Committee Of Management (BCOM) member Maureen Parker who has again volunteered to chase up on outstanding debts just prior to the financial year cut off, and to all our BCOM members who have had to deal with a rather difficult and change filled year. Thanks also to Roger Bland who filled our vacant Branch President's position following Len's resignation from the position.

Finally, thanks to all our BCOM and our rank and file members and delegates who have tirelessly contributed to a collective outcome for all members over the last year and previous years. Without committed members, we do not have a union, and without a union, we have very minimal protection against the forces lined up against Australian workers.

In solidarity

**JOHN ELLERY**  
Branch Secretary