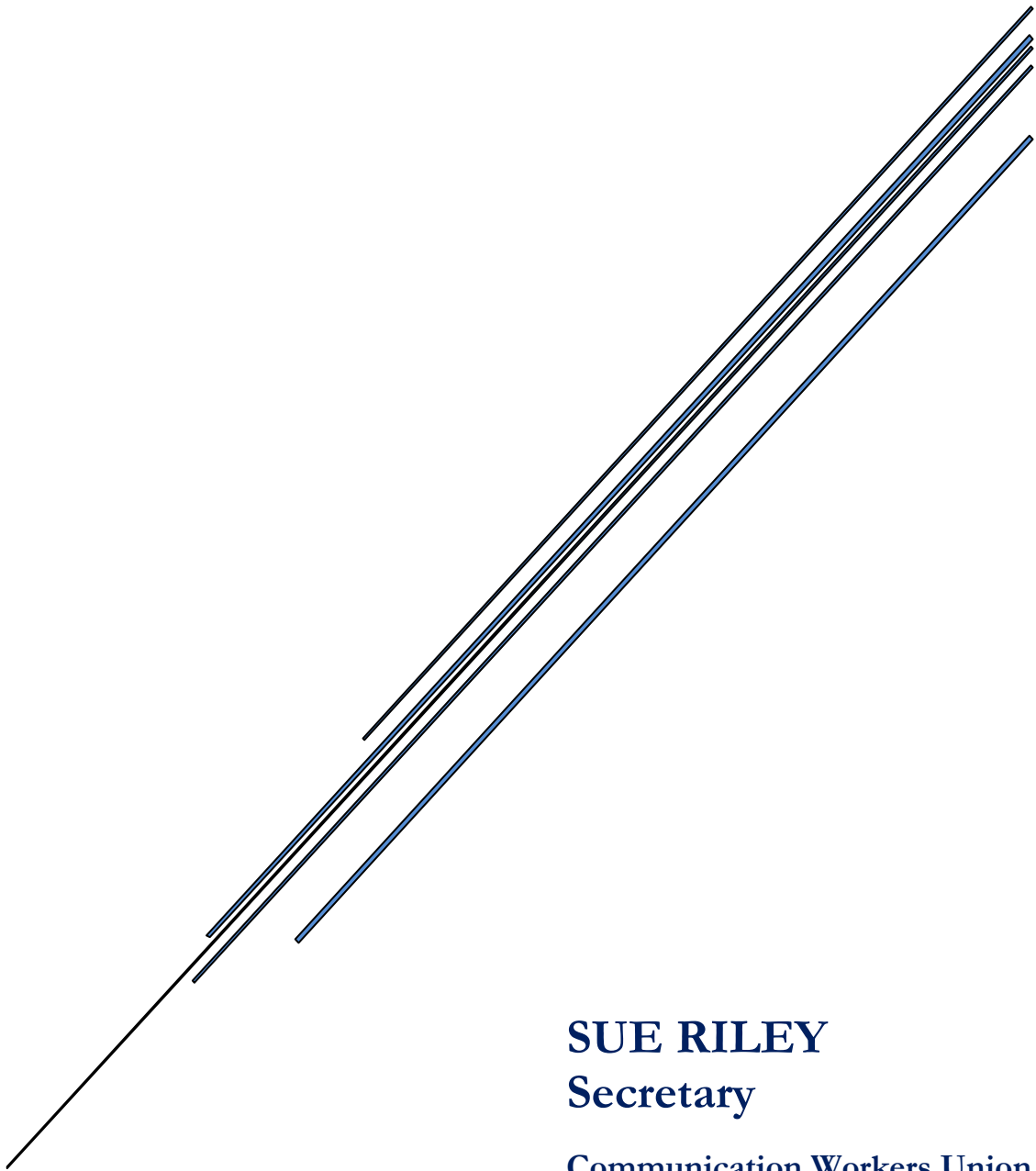


Secretary's Report 2021



SUE RILEY
Secretary

**Communication Workers Union
Telecommunication and
Services Branch Victoria**

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS 2021

Susan Riley
Secretary,
CWU (T&S) Victoria



BRANCH SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The CWU 20/21 year has been difficult for many under the COVID-19 circumstances and it's unavoidable to commence the report without mentioning Coronavirus. Fortunately to date we have received nil reports of any members who have tested positive. I know there are some who have been indirectly affected by way of isolating, restricted with border closures, unable to visit family and friends by maintaining Public Health Orders, and cancellation of holidays. We look forward to our days of re-opening and a new normal. Meanwhile the office has mostly remained open and John and I largely working from home.

BRANCH PERSONNEL

There have been no changes this year to our office personnel. Theresa has coped remarkably well given the COVID circumstances, and fortunately our retired administration officers Sharon Benson and Trish Willoughby have assisted us all when required which is greatly appreciated.

In September 2020, our Branch Committee of Management member Mark Dennis resigned as he accepted a position in another industry. We wish him well for his future in the Public Sector Industry. We welcomed Ian Wanden to the Branch Committee of Management in December 2020. He currently works for Telstra.

I can also advise you our Branch Vice President Amy Stubberfield has just resigned from her Employer ESTA and she has been accepted to join the Victorian Police Force. We will declare the Vice President position vacancy later tonight in our Branch Committee of Management meeting. I take this opportunity to thank Amy for her contributions, dedication and support to the CWU and the union movement.

RECRUITMENT

Given the on-going circumstances of COVID, we have not hired another recruiter because of the difficulty in accessing work sites. From 1/4/20 – 31/3/2021 the net loss of membership was 50. The exits were resignations, redundancies and terminations of unfinancial members. During that time Telstra largely maintained their commitment to the unions by placing a freeze on redundancies. (Unfortunately this resumed as of July this year.)

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Financial Year 20/21 has demonstrated a significant improvement from last financial year with a total comprehensive income of \$232,456. This figure includes \$78,433 which reflects the upward movement in the Industry Fund portfolio. The total income for 2021 does not show the employee redundancy of 190k as a liability as it has already been stated in 2020. (It appears under note 7B Other payables.) Total expenditure was down by \$108k. This is a result of Employee expenses down (wages, superannuation and Sharon Benson's leave liability/entitlements paid out), Admin expenses were down (telephone, lease changes and motor vehicle costs), and legal costs down by 21k. Revenue was increased with cash flow boosts from the Government. In the notes to the financial statements, note 1.24 states there was a net current asset deficiency of \$29k, and notwithstanding this, the report has been prepared on the basis that the Union is a going concern, which assumes continuity of normal business activities and the realisation and the settlement of liabilities in the normal course of business. The investment fund holds \$608,710 as at 31/3/21. The final point of note is reflected in note 2 'Events after the reporting period.' In May 2021, the Victorian and NSW T&S Branches released communications announcing their intention to amalgamate in the near future, subject to approval. I'll refer to this next.

AMALGAMATION

In order to achieve a more secure future for members and improve our direction with a focus on growth, the two T&S Branches are seeking to amalgamate. We think it makes financial and practical sense to combine our resources. It will provide immediate savings on branch expenses such as accounts, administration and auditing with only one reporting unit under the Fair Work (RO) Act. There would be one database, a centralised website, member communications, Facebook page, bulletins, fee collection and processing, banking, payroll and general ledgers. The cash and assets combined would result in an added ability for recruitment and campaigns, and position the new branch for growth in the communications/digital industry. We already work closely together on many joint issues and different locations is clearly not an issue as we've proven in the last 18months. The Branch Committee of Management of both branches have endorsed the amalgamation unanimously. Following this we went to the membership to seek approval via an online survey. The results were excellent with an overall return rate of 51% (usual union elections are far less) and an overwhelming 93.6% voted in favour and 6.4 % were against. The proposed way forward will involve some structural change with the creation of a smaller joint BCOM that has proportional representation: one Branch Secretary, President, Assistant Secretary and two Vice Presidents and fewer BCOM members. All positions will be honorary except the Branch Secretary. The next steps will include rule changes that require relevant approvals from the Communication Division, National Council, and the Fair Work Commission.

ESTA

The Operational Enterprise Agreement was certified in April 2020. Our minimum numbers claim was not able to be achieved, however there is a new clause in the Agreement which enabled the establishment of a Staffing Review Committee with representatives from all the Unions, (CWU,UFU,VAU) Industrial Relation Victoria (IRV), Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and ESTA. The committee commenced meetings at the end of September, and is chaired by ex-Commissioner Julius Rowe. In October the joint unions provided ESTA with their list of relevant data requests to assist with writing of submissions, with the aim of improving resources. Unfortunately to date this information has been delayed and we have been obstructed at every step. Escalation to Fair Work Commission is imminent.

The Admin/Support office employees Agreement expired on 30/6/21. Negotiations have been uneventful with ESTA's constant change of bargaining team due to resignations from their PnC department. There's no one left with experience longer than a few months! There are a few fundamental claims that are a priority and since we have not progressed, the members voted successfully to take protected Industrial Action. It commenced 9th August.

TELSTRA

The hottest topic is the structural separation announcement made to the ASX in April 2021. The structure within the Telstra Group, expected to be completed by December 2021 includes: **InfraCo Fixed** - which would own and operate Telstra's physical infrastructure assets; the ducts, fibre, data centres, and exchanges that underpin Telstra's fixed telecommunication network. **InfraCo Towers** – which would own and operate Telstra's physical mobile tower assets and **ServeCo** – which focuses on creating products and services and supporting customers. It would own the active parts of the network, including the radio access network and spectrum assets to ensure Telstra maintain mobile coverage and network. Telstra also intends to establish its international business under a separate subsidiary within the Telstra Group. The international assets will be transferred to the new subsidiary over time subject to relevant approvals. Telstra intends to seek shareholder approval of the transferring of assets and legal separation at the AGM in October. Following the restructure, shareholders will hold shares in the new holding company on a like for like basis with no change to their ownership levels.

The process to enable the legal restructure will establish a new holding company for the Telstra Group. The creation of separate subsidiaries, InfrCo Fixed (which will be the existing Telstra Corporation), InfraCo Towers, ServeCo and Telstra International, and transferring the relevant assets into InfraCo Towers and ServeCo.

Employees have already been notified which subsidiary they will transfer to in December. Meanwhile, Telstra have belatedly commenced bargaining for a new Enterprise Agreement – which expires 30th September. They are seeking to have 4 Agreements which we are opposed to –why not have the one Agreement for all? Telstra also flagged their desire to

vary the Telstra Award with changes to Ordinary hours and ability to have split shifts. This of course has been rejected by all the unions and so then Telstra flagged it in the bargaining discussions. Interesting times ahead!

Telstra held up on their relentless redundancies for the most part of the year and then resumed as soon as their freeze on redundancies time frame lapsed.

AUSTRALIA POST

A number of issues have confronted the Australia Post techs. Primarily, the gradual move from a letters based operation to the parcels product has increased, in the era of increased reliance of parcels networks (including the private sector operators) to distribute items. The additional take up of home shopping in an era of Covid has also placed pressure on this parcels area. Post has also rapidly increased the installation of parcels machines in a number of locations, rather than relying on the single facility model (Ardeer).

Issues have been agitated at the Joint Consultative Committee with mixed results, and we have been forced to resort to the Fair Work Commission in order to bring some sense to management's lack of decision making ability. It would appear that Post's management group is paralysed with poorly thought out structural changes at the top, followed by confusion at the middle level.

The Post EBA is finalised, however, it did not involve Branch officials who represent tech issues as they were excluded from bargaining. A group of Techs from NSW and Vic gained nomination as individual bargaining agents for the EBA negotiations, however very little was achieved in the considerable number of logged items that were represented by these Bargaining Agents. It would appear that there was a deal cut with the majority Postal Secretaries and the Divisional office of the Union, together with Post, to deliver a "roll over" EBA. A vote by ballot has commenced and the outcome is imminent. Vic P&T Branch, Vic T&S, NSW T&S and the Tasmanian ETU branch (Electrical Division), of which Tasmanian postal members are now part of, following a takeover of the old Comms Division Tasmanian branch, opposed the EBA.

Issues that have continued to be dealt with over the last year include shift rosters, Covid response, resourcing, demarcation with operations staff over tech work, help desk and training function, structure, Team leader, 2 I/C and SME levels, recruitment, and other issues including a harder nosed attitude to compensation. Our members have continued to hook up regularly with interstate technical colleagues, which has enabled sharing of concerns across the main numbers of Techs. This arrangement will continue, as a decent collective response across all states is beneficial.

THANK YOU

I would like to gratefully thank our former and current Branch Committee of Management members for their support and for volunteering their time to assist in the running of the branch. I extend that appreciation to the BCOM Executive - President Kelvin Welbourn, Vice President Amy Stubberfield – who sadly leaves us today, and Assistant Secretary Scott Thomson - for their support and commitment. Thank you to Theresa Bradley our new(ish) bookkeeper, for her dedication and courage in stepping into rather big shoes! I am forever grateful to Sharon and Trish for their ongoing support who are always ready to assist us all when required. Thank you to John Ellery for his ongoing support and dedication and achieving better results for our members.

I specifically want to thank all delegates who often volunteer hours of their personal time to achieve better outcomes for all members. I'm indebted to you for your endless campaigning to achieve positive results and constant endorsement of the CWU.

Finally, I thank all our rank and file members who join to make a collective that I'm very proud to be a part of.

Yours in Unity,

SUE RILEY
Secretary
CWU (T&S) Vic