

A Fair Australia

Transport

Background Paper

ACTU CONGRESS 2003

Quick Fact:

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CONGRESS 2000

1. This is a new area of policy.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE CONGRESS 2000

Regional Solidarity

2. There has been considerable joint activity by the transport unions at a regional level since last ACTU Congress. Transport unions have moved to put into place the International Transport Federations's (ITF) Vancouver 2002 Global Solidarity program. In early April 2003 the ACTU in conjunction with the New Zealand Congress of Trade Unions (NZCTU) and the ITF sponsored a successful Regional Transport conference involving over 80 participants including the NZ Transport Minister.
3. The ACTU, NZCTU and ITF conference recognised the common issues and companies working within Australia and New Zealand and resolved to work more closely together. This has resulted in a number of joint activities between Australian and New Zealand based unions.
4. The ITF affiliated unions are meeting on a regular basis and recognise the need to develop a joint strategy, including the development of regional federations and joint organising and training, to face the

challenges of the removal of financial and regulatory barriers within Australia and the region.

5. There is a growing recognition that similar issues face workers in many if not all sectors of the transport industry as mergers and takeovers sweep the industry. As a consequence unions must jointly develop appropriate industrial and policy responses. The similarities found in the issues surrounding Cabotage in the Maritime and Aviation sectors are but one example of these common issues.

Land Transport

6. Land transport continues to be significantly impaired by the lack of a national land transport network consisting of the National Highway System, the Interstate National Railway system together with nationally and regionally important major roads and rail links including effective links to ports and airports. The Federal Government has failed to invest in modernising land transport infrastructure.
7. The Federal Government released the "AusLink" Transport Green Paper in November 2002. This has opened up the process for a major review of Federal, State and Territory land transport and investment plans, including the release of a Federal Government White Paper due to be released late in 2003.

Maritime and Stevedoring

8. The use of flag of convenience (FOC) ships on our coast dramatically increases our exposure to a maritime catastrophe such as occurred with the "Prestige". We are constantly reminded of the potential for environmental incidents as a result of substandard ships or poorly trained crews in our seas and harbours.
9. The wholesale abuse of the single voyage permits and continual voyage permits system by the Federal Government is a direct attack on Australian jobs. Vessels, which never leave the Australian coastline, are openly encouraged to import cheap foreign labour to replace Australian workers at greatly reduced wages and conditions. In addition, it needs to be recognised that shore based work is appropriately performed by stevedores or shore based employees.
10. The recent debate on national security has highlighted gaping holes in coastal security and has shown the duplicitous attitude of the Federal Government when it comes to shipping. As the Government warns of security threats against us and the ever-increasing odds of terrorist attacks, they continue to leave our coast open to exploitation by FOC ship owners and operators.

11. By contrast through the very nature of their job, men and women who work on Australian ships contribute to the nation's security.

ISSUES FOR POLICY AT CONGRESS 2003

12. Congress recognises that a strong economy is dependent on modern and efficient national infrastructure, particularly in the critical area of transport. An efficient transport industry requires a seamless logistical chain across all modes of transport.
13. Renewal and enhancement of transport infrastructure is necessary to ensure the safety and security of transport workers and the public. Renewal and enhancement also reduces business costs, improves the environment, contributes to social justice by increasing mobility through providing an alternative to the car, reduces traffic congestion and expands opportunities for economic development in regional Australia.
14. The extension and maintenance of an affordable, reliable, safe and efficient public transport system is vital to an increasingly mobile and disparate population.
15. The ACTU recognises that cabotage protects workers jobs and conditions in both the maritime and aviation industries. Australian ships and planes staffed by Australian labour adds to the security of our skies, ports and coastline.
16. It is recognised that many sectors of the transport industry actively compete against each other. The transport market is distorted by deregulation and the use of unprotected labour. The transport unions will continue to work to ensure there is fair competition within the industry, particularly in relation to wages and conditions.

Land Transport

17. There are now economic assessments that our transport systems will not cope with the predicted 100% increase in road and rail freight tasks and 50% increase in the passenger task by 2020. These increases in the transport task will also give rise to an increase in urban congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.
18. A necessary development is the establishment of a single national transport infrastructure fund covering both road and rail with a common set of criteria for investment (including economic, social, safety, environmental and regional criteria). In addition the Federal Government must continue its traditional leadership role in investing in transport infrastructure projects.

19. The Federal Government must maintain its traditional leadership role with roads, including the National Highway and other national projects that are critical to the strategic provision of the right road network to meet Australia's needs.
20. The Federal Government has failed to invest in modernisation of the interstate rail network. As an urgent first step, the interstate rail network audit report must be implemented by the Federal Government, with a 10-year program of rail re-vitalisation.
21. The Federal Government should initiate a 5 year rolling plan for transport infrastructure development (within a 20 year strategic outlook) with the plan to incorporate State and Territory Plans such as Melbourne's 2030 Plan, WA's Sustainability Strategy and Freight Network Review, the NSW Action for Transport 2010, and Queensland's Rail Network strategy. All tiers of government, regional development bodies and the private sector should be encouraged to develop individual projects in this national plan.
22. Consistent performance benchmarks need to be developed across the rail and road modes together with competitive neutrality in relation to access pricing and taxation to ensure world class infrastructure is developed.
23. There is a need to review national transport bodies. The following proposals need careful consideration:
 - Increased funding for the newly established National Transport Commission to provide a focus for ongoing regulatory reform for the road and rail industries;
 - The establishment of a National Transport Advisory Council, which addresses both freight and passenger transport issues including the development of a National Transport Investment Plan; and
 - The inclusion of a union representative on the Australian Logistics Council, National Transport Commission and National Transport Advisory Council to ensure transport workers concerns particularly relating to safety and security are addressed.
24. Australia lacks a national passenger transport strategy. No other OECD country takes the Australian government view that urban public transport is not a national responsibility. The economic, environmental and social impacts of urban transport are a national challenge. Australia's major cities now have clear 'transport rich' and 'transport poor' regions because of the creation of new suburbs without passenger transport infrastructure. Improved services in outer urban and regional Australia, safety, pricing and taxation (including extension of FBT to public transport) are priority areas for action.

25. The Federal Government needs to play a role in assisting State Governments to improve and extend public transport. The Federal Government must also assist State Governments to integrate transport, land and environment objectives and to work in co-operation with local governments to achieve greater use of public transport and sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling and lessen the dependency on cars.
26. While Auslink is a good concept there has been widespread opposition from union, community and State and Territory Governments to the AusLink proposals because of the failure of the Federal Government to provide:
 - more funds for transport infrastructure investments;
 - a commitment to urban public transport;
 - a national transport system that incorporates sustainability, accessibility, environmental and social equity goals; and
 - an adequate legislative framework for the proposed new transport arrangements.
27. Unions, user groups, community and industry organisations need to campaign to fill in the missing links of the AusLink proposal and for a greater role for public transport in urban and regional areas.

Maritime and Stevedoring

28. Fundamental to a strong maritime and stevedoring industry is support for the investment in and the protection of Australian workers so that they may maintain their participation on vessels trading around our vast coastline and continue to carry our imports and exports to overseas markets.

Aviation

29. The ACTU recognises that the aviation industry is vital to the Australian economy for the carriage of passengers and freight within Australia and overseas. Tens of thousands of Australians are provided jobs by the aviation industry.
30. The Federal Government through its regulatory and legislative regime has a significant impact on the utilisation of and investment in the industry.
31. We must ensure the safety and interests of the general public and aviation workers are placed before profit and obscure notions of competition.

32. The opening of the Australian aviation market to global competition is unacceptable, particularly where this so called competition results in a lessening of safety, industrial and other regulatory standards. The Australian market can not sustain further entrants without a lessening of standards.
33. The focus of our public aviation safety organisations must be on the primacy of safety in all their operations. Airservices Australia has become too focussed on profits over safety and services, especially those to regional communities. Moreover, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority has not been fully focussed on surveillance and compliance activities.
34. Due to the importance of aviation safety and the need to adequately resource regional communities it would be bad public policy to contract out fundamental aviation safety services.
- air traffic services,
 - fire services, and
 - national airways system maintenance, installation and support services
- should be transferred back to the public sector to ensure that the risk to the travelling public is minimised.
35. Location specific charging for Airservices' airport services operates to the significant disadvantage of regional Australia, while delivering some benefit to users of capital city airports where charges fell with the introduction of location specific charging. The current charging regime has imposed additional costs on almost every regional airport user and requires a financial contribution from the Federal Government, recouped through fuel levies, to cap regional charges at affordable levels.
36. The aviation industry is a significant employer. The level of employment is directly linked to the level of service provided and the level of safety standards in the industry.
37. The ACTU will work with affiliates to ensure:
- a coordinated approach to Enterprise Bargaining to ensure the terms and conditions of aviation workers are maintained and improved;
 - the use of overseas-based labour employed on inferior contracts by Australian carriers is eliminated;
 - out-sourcing of services is kept to a minimum; and

- access and assistance to on the job education and training is improved.

International Cooperation

38. The ACTU will work with local and international transport industry unions and the International Transport Federation to build international links and solidarity.

Women in Transport

39. It has been recognised that there are many barriers to women in transport, both in entering the industry, workplace cultures, physical limitations (in some occupations), and an overall lack of support networks within union and organisational structures to deal with gender specific issues, such as representation.
40. Transport is an industry where the ideals of “balancing work and family” have yet to be extensively pursued by the unions, and therefore is an industry often left behind in improving conditions for workers with families. Clauses such as paid leave entitlements for parents (maternity leave in particular) the introduction of flexible work practices for mothers returning to work such as job sharing, and adequate childcare need to be given greater prominence in enterprise bargaining.

Safety and Security First

41. The ACTU will work with affiliates and the industry to ensure the safety of transport workers comes first. The identification and elimination of occupational health and safety and security risks will be a priority.
42. The transport industry is safety and security sensitive. The maintenance and continual review of stringent safety standards and adequate staffing levels is vital to the success of the industry.
43. The ACTU will campaign to ensure that:
 - the aviation passenger to cabin crew ratio is not reduced;
 - maintenance and engineering standards are maintained;
 - transport workers recognise that impaired workers are a threat to themselves, their fellow workers and the general public and there is a requirement for appropriate and agreed means of dealing with drug and alcohol use. Random drug testing is not the means by which the issue can be addressed successfully;

- the general public and transport workers are secure from any external threat;
- regional airport security is to the same standard as major airports;
- all cabin crew including regional carriers are provided with accredited safety and security training; and
- there are appropriate national occupational health & safety standards for the transport industry, particularly as they relate to fatigue.