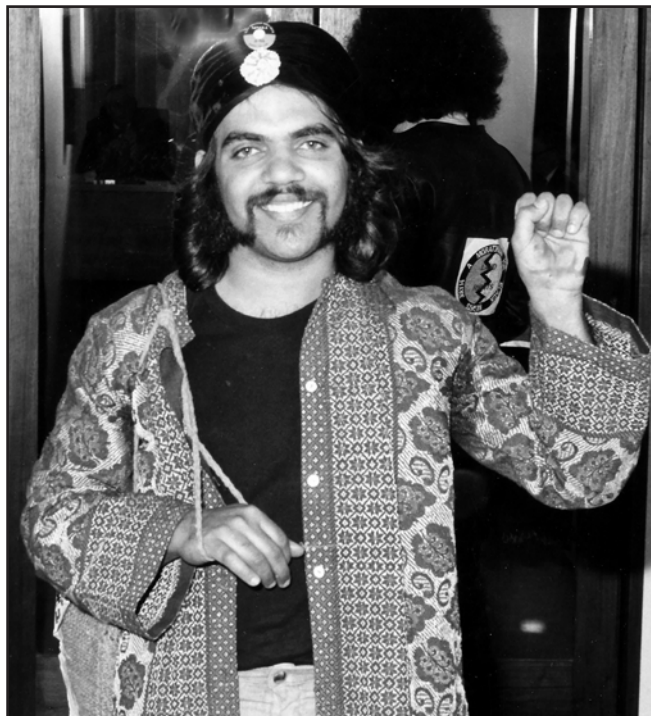


The Queensland Journal of Labour History

No. 30 Autumn/Winter 2020

\$5.00

The Brisbane Labour History Association



Sam Watson 1952–2019



Brisbane **L**abour **H**istory **A**ssociation

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Printed by: Cost Less Copies, 654 Ipswich Rd, Annerley

Subscribing to The Queensland Journal of Labour History

Subscription to the journal is included in membership of the Brisbane Labour History Association, which is currently:

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Unwaged \$10

Organisations: \$150

Small or poor organisations can apply for a concessional membership for \$50.

A year's membership extends from 1 July to 30 June.

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Front Cover Photo:

Sam Watson, during the occupation of the JD Story Building, University of Queensland
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No. 30, Autumn/Winter 2020

ISSN 1832–9926

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LABOUR HISTORY

A Journal of Labour and Social History

Labour History is an internationally recognised journal published in November and May by Liverpool University Press for the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.



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Editorial

Dean Wharton

The BLHA Executive hopes that all our members and readers are well and remain in good health throughout the current pandemic, and of course, when it is eventually over. We considered, for a while, the possibility of only distributing this issue electronically to those who could access it. We assumed that printing and distributing this issue might not be possible. Although this has not occurred, we still don't know when we will be able to hold our first event of 2020 and as a result the BLHA Executive have decided to extend all personal memberships.

Normally you would receive a membership renewal with the Autumn/Winter edition of this journal but **all personal memberships are now extended until the end of June 2021.**

The process of producing this issue has also been a little unusual. Normally the editorial team members meet up on an irregular basis and debate content and allocate work. Like everyone we have had to do much of the work for this issue remotely and in isolation. Sadly, this has coincided with the decision by Phil Griffiths to leave Brisbane for less sunnier climes. Phil has been joint editor of this journal for the last three years and his guidance and leadership over that period has been considerable. Greg Mallory and I thank him for his involvement and hope that he will continue to be

involved from afar, if possible.

Thanks Phil.

Greg Mallory himself stood down as President of the BLHA at our AGM in November 2019 after 17 years in that position. Dr. Jeff Rickertt was elected as the new President of the BLHA. It is Greg's contribution to the last 30 years that Greg reflects upon in conversation with me in our first article. The article by its nature is highly subjective.

Over recent years this journal has published a series of articles about people who are making history today. This series continues with an account of the clash between the Quandamooka First Nations, the mining company Sibelco and the Newman LNP Queensland Government over sand mining and native title on Minjerribah/North Stradbroke Island. The focus of this material is an interview with Cameron Costello, Chief Executive Officer of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC), the body corporate for Quandamooka land and waters.

In 1910 German Immigrants en route to Queensland on the SS *Osterley* held a May Day celebration on board ship. Andrew Bonnell's article provides us with much detail of the hysterical response of the Australian press of the time.

The significant changes within Australian industrial relations over the past 30 years are discussed by John Martin in his article adapted from his PhD thesis from Griffith University. The reaction of three trade unions in responding to these changes, particularly by embracing centralisation, is detailed. For ethical reasons, John has applied anonymity to the identity of the three unions in this article.

The journalist Henry Mayhew produced a series of articles throughout the 1850s that described the state and conditions of the working classes in England and its Empire. We have included an edited version of an article that first appeared in *The Morning Chronicle* on the 7 March 1850. In this Mayhew initially discusses the state of the British merchant fleet but goes on to allow the sailors to describe in their own words the conditions on board merchant ships for emigrants to Australia. With thanks to long-time contributor Humphrey McQueen who directed us to the original.

Unfortunately, we have more than our usual number of obituaries. In addition to these, I would like to add a few personal words about Margaret Liessi who passed on in November 2019.

I met Margaret, and her sister Lynette Trad, several times over the last couple of years as I interviewed them about their father, Alex Macdonald; research they themselves instigated with an appeal in this journal several years ago. Margaret had the advantage over me by remembering me from an earlier meeting, in completely different circumstances, many years before.

I regret that we didn't meet up more often and I will always remember how Margaret and my six-year-old daughter ended up in hysterics over a story being related. On behalf of the BLHA Executive I offer her husband Bruno, her sister Lyn, and both their families, our sincere condolences.

In our next issue we will start to publish edited sections of the memoirs of Victor Slater. We would like to hear from anyone who may know the whereabouts of Victor's family.

President's Report Autumn/Winter 2020

Jeff Rickertt

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into stark relief the fact that societies do not function without labour. For all the talk of an imminent world of automation, we see clearly in the collapse of economies and services around the globe that we all still rely on real workers to produce, pack and transport our food and goods, teach our children, clean our offices, drive our buses and trains, provide our entertainment, care for our ill and elderly and run our information technology systems. The apartment residents of Italy and Spain who gather on their balconies every evening to applaud the healthcare, Red Cross and ambulance workers are acknowledging a vital fact: cooperative living labour lies at the centre of human existence, as crucial to our survival and wellbeing as clean air and water and a stable eco-system.

Through the pages of this journal and in our activities, the BLHA, too, acknowledges the contributions of working people. In this emergency, we salute all the workers who are on the frontlines and backlines of the effort to keep everyone alive and well.

The BLHA will continue to function as best we can throughout the crisis. Like many organisations, we had prepared a

calendar of events for 2020 before everyone was confined to barracks. We have had to cancel our annual Alex Macdonald Memorial Lecture, which Dr Phil Griffiths was to deliver in May, and of course there is no Labour Day gathering this year at which we can promote our activities, sell our journal and encourage others to take an interest in workers' history. Other plans have also been put on hold.

Recognising the impact of the shutdown, the BLHA Executive has extended all current financial memberships to 30 June 2021.

This issue of the journal, however, is proof of life. In the circumstances, I am delighted that we have been able to put it together and send it into the world. Thanks must go to our volunteer editorial team, especially Dean Wharton, for their dedication to the task in the midst of many other demands on their time.

One BLHA initiative that might even prosper during self-isolation is our oral history program. Last year we decided to encourage members to become amateur oral historians, recording the stories of family members and

associates who have been involved in trade unions, labour-aligned political parties, workers' struggles and progressive causes. In an era of rapid technological and industrial relations change, even stories of working life are important to capture.

Now may be an opportune time to dive into this project. If you cannot visit your intended interviewees, recordings can be made over the phone or via online telecommunication platforms. I will be posting information and links on the BLHA Facebook page to help you along. I am also keen to hear directly from anyone wanting information and advice on how to go about it. Send me an email - jrickertt@optusnet.com.au

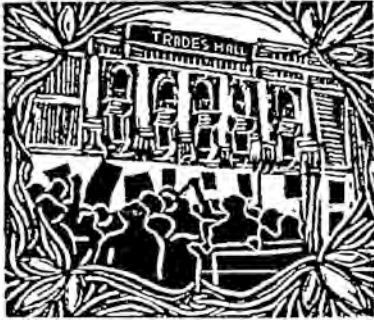
In this, the 50th anniversary of the first Vietnam Moratorium marches in Australia, the BLHA is also planning a one-day conference late this year on Labour and War, with the Vietnam conflict a centre-piece of the program. An invitation for students to submit expressions of interest for a presentation at this conference can be found on the notice page of this issue. Despite current uncertainty over the date of the event, I would encourage early career historians and others to offer a paper. If the event does not go ahead as scheduled, we will postpone rather than cancel.

This issue marks the first without Dr Greg Mallory in the President's role since the journal began. Greg has been the backbone of the BLHA, and in recognition of his contribution both to the Association and the field of Australian labour history, the BLHA

awarded him life membership at our AGM last year. Earlier this year we celebrated his contribution with a well-attended dinner. It is an honour for me to fill Greg's shoes and I wish to thank him for his dedication to the BLHA over so many years. I am delighted he has chosen to remain a member of the management committee.

I also want to farewell another BLHA stalwart, Dr Phil Griffiths, who is relocating to Melbourne. Phil has made an enormous contribution to the BLHA during his time in Brisbane. As well as serving as Treasurer, he has played an important role on the journal's editorial committee and was the driving force behind the BLHA's hosting of the 2017 National Labour History Conference. Phil's tremendous knowledge of working-class history, his organisational and editorial prowess and his camaraderie and willingness to give of his time and talents will be sorely missed. We wish him well.

This week, watching images of workers in face masks delivering essential supplies to residents in Beijing, and nurses in face masks setting up a tent hospital in New York's Central Park, an old socialist slogan came to mind: 'The Cause of Labour is the Hope of the World'. The deeper meaning struck home. Labour's cause provides hope because labour itself – the labour of those workers in Beijing and New York and everywhere else – is the very stuff of our biological and social existence, the thing that keeps us alive and without which no society can function. A good side to be on.



Brisbane **L**abour **H**istory **A**ssociation

Call for Expressions of interest: Labour and War Conference Brisbane, 12 October 2020

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam Moratorium rallies and marches in Australia, the Brisbane Labour History Association will hold a one-day conference on Saturday 12 October on the theme of Labour and War.

While Vietnam will be an important focus, the conference will be framed by the broader arc of the Australian labour movement's historic involvement in and responses to military conflict.

Possible topics include the frontier wars, the Boer War, the two World Wars, Korea and the more recent conflicts in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. Broader thematic approaches are also welcome.

The BLHA particularly invites undergraduate/honours students in the fields of history, political science and peace and conflict studies to submit expressions of interest for papers at this event. Group presentations will be considered.

A title and an abstract of no more than 400 words should be submitted to Dr. Jeff Rickertt at jrickertt@optusnet.com.au no later than 31 August 2020.

Presenters selected for inclusion in the conference program will be offered an opportunity to publish their paper in *The Queensland Journal of Labour History*.

If COVID-19 prevents the conference from proceeding as scheduled, it will be postponed rather than cancelled.

Articles

Greg Mallory Brisbane Labour History Association Past President In conversation with Dean Wharton



*Greg Mallory,
(picture courtesy of Brian Ratcliffe)*

Greg Mallory has been central to the Brisbane Labour History Association since its launch in 1990. Last November he stood down as President after 17 years at the helm and was awarded life membership. A celebration for Greg was

held in March this year. 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the 1990 launch and the 15th year of publication for *The Queensland Journal of Labour History*.

Greg spoke to Dean Wharton about his 30-year involvement in the BLHA.

Dean: How did the BLHA start back in 1990?

Greg: There was a Brisbane branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) before 1990. Greg Patmore, who was involved in the Sydney branch of the ASSLH and was on the national committee, came up to Brisbane and encouraged us to start it up again. A lot of the old Communist Party of Australia people had this interest in labour history, it was part of the way they viewed socialism. I used to regard them as being very old, but they were probably only in their early 60s at that stage. I'd been active on the Left for most of my life, in teachers' unions, the Labor Party and the Communist Party. I was doing my PhD on the BLF and the Wharfies so got involved. There were Oral History Association members as well as Jim Henderson, Brad Bowden and Brad's

father, Warren. We set up the branch, Brad became President and I became Vice-President.

We had regular meetings during those years, regular events. I remember one event when I brought Ted Roach up from Sydney to speak and it was practically a cyclone in Brisbane. Only about ten people turned up. Ted spoke about his activism in the WWF and the CPA. In all Ted's narratives he was very critical of Jim Healey; it was useful stuff for my thesis.

In 1994 we had two very successful events. We had an event in May on the Communist Party of Australia at which Ross Fitzgerald spoke about Fred Paterson. That was held in the old Parliament building. In September we held a well-attended event to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Alex Macdonald's passing. That was in the QCU building. Colleagues of Alex from the CPA spoke but also a couple of DLP or NCC-ers who were opposed to Alex during his lifetime but gave pretty good presentations. But the association petered out after that.

D: So, what happened between 1994 and 2000?

G: The association stopped functioning until about 2000. I don't think the organisation met at all during that period. I was active politically, I was very keen, I had been Vice-President. From my perspective I was wanting to finish my PhD and I was teaching at the time. I can't remember why the association didn't meet but many of the old comrades were becoming sick and some died, such as Jim. Unfortunately, all the documents from the early periods are missing.

D: You relaunched the BLHA in 2000?

G: Yes, I'd finished my doctorate. Martin Thomas had organised a meeting of the Trade Union Defence Committee. Among those present were Lachlan Hurse along with Jeff Rickertt and Carole Ferrier. I was invited to speak about my research and at the end I suggested that we should relaunch the BLHA. This was around May 2000. I remember when it was because I'd run a marathon earlier that month.

From that suggestion a meeting was arranged at the Paddington Workers Club attended by a lot of the old comrades including Jeannie O'Connor, at which we re-formed. Brad and I adopted our old roles. Alan Gardiner and John Kellett served as Secretary during this period.

We were very active during that period. I do remember we had a meeting on the Saturday of the AFL Grand Final. We couldn't hold it in the afternoon, when we held most of our events, because our speaker, Ian Syson, who was speaking about Literature and the Left, was from Melbourne and wanted to finish in time to watch the match. For some reason the QCU building was locked and 50 of us congregated outside. I noticed there was a hotel down the road, so I suggested we go there; so we booked a room and we had the meeting. Dan O'Neil was there. The bloke from the QCU turned up and said we were welcome to return to the QCU building, but we'd already spent the money for the room. We had a good meeting and Ian and a few of us got to see the game.

At another event, I organised for Jack Munday to attend and talk about the Communist Party. I spoke about the SPA/CPA split in 1971. There was some trouble at that event. Hecklers from



Greg Mallory at May Day

Uncharted Waters

Social Responsibility in
Australian Trade Unions

Greg Mallory



Foreword by Jack Munday

the floor accused the CPA of working with the trade unions to sell out the electricians during the SEQEB dispute. We had to stop proceedings a couple of times. I think this shows how you walk a fine line between contentious issues when you relate labour history.

D: Was this a sign of the fall-out within the BLHA to come?

G: The fall-out surfaced in 2003 before the national conference we held in Brisbane, but issues started well before that. There were clashes between personalities and about politics that was worsened by a dispute within the executive about the funding of the *Radical Brisbane* book. From 2000 until 2003 I thought we had all worked well together. When the flare-up started it took me by surprise. It was only afterwards that I reflected on what had

happened and saw what had been going on around me.

I was asked to become President of the BLHA so that an election would take place for the position of Vice-President. I became President but following the election a decision was made to remove the rest of the BLHA Executive by setting up the Queensland Labour History Group; a move which got the support of the some of the QCU and union leaders. I was offered a role in the new organisation, but I was having none of it. I didn't like it and I didn't want to be a party to it. Our secretary walked away and the BLHA stopped having meetings.

D: But you restarted the BLHA a few months later?

In the Spring of 2004. I arranged a meeting at the Paddington Workers Club. At the funerals of both Jack Saunders and Ted Reithmuller I recounted how their action that day saved the BLHA. Jack, in typical Labor Party style, took out his wallet and put \$100 on the table. Ted, reflecting his Communist Party background, took out a wad of paper and started transcribing accounts and making notes. Ted at that time might have been a member of Socialist Alliance, we had no issue with anyone regarding their politics, we just wanted to concentrate on labour history.

I then went down to Sydney for a meeting of the ASSLH, our national body. There was no videoconferencing in those days. I represented the BLHA and told them what was happening. I think I even mentioned that we thought we were down to about 30 members at that point. Greg Patmore told me that if we had just 10 members and Labour History Queensland had a thousand members it didn't matter; as far as the

ASSLH was concerned, the BLHA was the established branch and that was that. Meanwhile Queensland Labour History sent a letter asking for recognition and they didn't get it. I'm not sure when that group stopped being active.

It helped that I had some support from figures from the old communist parties; they knew how to organise and influence. We had a raging success with an event we held at the Terminus Hotel, what is now The Fox, on Rights at Work. Jack Munday, Howard Guille and Andrew Vickers spoke, among others. Its success gave us the impetus to kick on.

We ran a folk event at East Brisbane Bowls club, had some good singers including Dennis Kevins. From that we were invited to the Woodford Folk Festival for a couple of years, the BLHA sponsored its own performers singing trade union ballads.

Dale Jacobson took over as secretary following Ted, and Janis Bailey organised and was the original editor for *The Queensland Journal of Labour History* which we launched in 2005. I had some experience with the Sydney branch because I was often down there and I wanted us to emulate their journal, *The Hummer*. I also appreciated the fact they had their own banner which is why we organised to have one made.

Janice also organised The Red-Green Conference. Again, Jack Munday spoke, along with Tony Maher of the Miners Union and Ian Lowe, the environmental science academic.

When Ron Monaghan took over as Secretary of the QCU we enhanced our relationship with them. That had a lot to do with John Spreckley's relationship with Ron at the Missoes but Ron was also genuinely interested in labour history.

I was elected to the executive of the ASSLH and Janice raised the issue of incorporation for the national association. This now helps with issues to do with the national and local journals. At one stage we had three BLHA executive members on the national executive. Sigrid McCausland, Ross Gwyther and me.

For me, one of the highlights of the last ten years was the Young Labour Historians. The Politics department at UQ got some finance to fund several undergraduate or honours students to undertake trade union research. They produced some phenomenal papers, on Jack Egerton, Alex Macdonald, on the Green Bans in Brisbane. There was nothing in the established literature on Green Bans in Brisbane, we were completely ignored, but India Anderson wrote about it. I think all but one of the six papers that were produced were printed in our journal, the other one we still aim to update and use.

Dean: You've stepped down as President, but you're not stepping down from the Executive?

Greg: I'm not stepping down from the Executive, but I am stepping back a little. I like what we've decided to do about our oral history project, to ask members to start collecting their own stories of experiences in working life. I'd like to get involved in that. I'm still involved in the journal committee and I think it's great that the journal is going well. I started the annual Alex Macdonald Lecture back in 2009 when I asked Margaret Levi to present to us and I think we need to concentrate on running events, including members, including trade unionists. I'm really positive about the future of the BLHA.

Stopping the Digging: Quandamooka First Peoples and Sand Mining

An interview with Cameron Costello,
Executive Director, Quandamooka
Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal
Corporation (QYAC)

Howard Guille and
Ross Gwyther

Introduction

In accordance with the Federal Native Title Act, the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) was established on 4 July 2011. It has a Board of Directors elected by its Quandamooka members and a CEO responsible to that Board. Cameron Costello is the current CEO.



Cameron Costello

(<http://www.qyac.net.au/media.html>)

Q: The Native Title settlement was made in 2011; when did you become involved in the negotiations of the Quandamooka Claim on Minjerribah?

A: The negotiation team leading into the finalisation of the ILUA Agreement and the determination had representatives from each of the 12 family groups. I was appointed by my family as one of the people in the negotiation team in 2009. Those negotiations were with the state and also with Sibelco. At that time (2009) the State and Sibelco were both wanting mining to continue.

Q: And the claim was initiated in 1996?

A: 1996: I was too young to remember the beginning and the early years of the claim.

When I joined the negotiations, I was actually a State Government bureaucrat and had been since 2007. Before that, and after Uni, I worked in the Brisbane City Council, in Indigenous Sport & Rec Policy and then Indigenous Policy. I studied law from 2002 to 2004, and then worked at Clayton Utz Lawyers and then jumped across to Arts Queensland working there till 2011. Hence during the negotiations and when we got our Native Title and when Newman got in, I was working with the State Government. And part of the negotiation team against the State Government!

Q: What was the tenor of the negotiations with the State Government?

A: In the early days, when Peter Beattie was in power, some of the delay was internal—within the Quandamooka people—about dealing with mining. An Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) was done covering an existing mine and it was authorised by the Quandamooka people because the mining leases were

still occurring. This became a big issue and included Federal Court arguments about whether the authorisation of that ILUA had been done according to traditional decision processes.

Even though the Court ultimately found that all the procedures and so forth had been followed there was a massive delay and one of the applicants to the claim was removed.¹ This led to our claim not being taken seriously by the State. It only got going again when the current QYAC Chair, Dr Valerie Cooms, who was at the Queensland South Native Title Services, had some serious discussions with the Quandamooka people. The Bligh Government was in power and the Federal Court set down a timeframe which meant all parties—us and the State—had to take it seriously.

Q: And what about discussions with the Mining Company?

A: The Bligh Government had a focus on wanting to end sand mining and transition to National Parks. The mining company wanted to see mining extended beyond 2019.

This meant that the company had to get the Quandamooka people on side: they had to present a package to convince the Quandamooka people to say to the State Government, “We want to continue mining”. The company never produced a package that was going to do that.

I can remember vividly, some of those discussions with the Mining Company where some of our representatives just stood up and went, “Can you at least give us X because we can’t even stand up in front of our own mob with what you’re offering. They will just laugh us down.”

It was pretty pathetic, what they were offering the Quandamooka people to keep mining our country. In the end, the Quandamooka people had to weigh up what the Mining Company was offering and what the State Government was offering. There was no competition.

I firmly believe that the Mining Company thought that because they employed some prominent Quandamooka people who were on the side of mining and would drive the politics of it through the community, they could offer something small and so mining would continue. They were sorely mistaken because we were there to represent the whole Quandamooka people not just a group employed by the Mining Company. Their offer was never going to out-weigh Quandamooka people’s broader views on destructive industries on their island and the alternative that was being offered by the State Government.

As a negotiation group we felt that it was up to the Mining Company to convince us to extend mining. And they fell far short of it.

Q Did the environmental movement get involved with the Quandamooka people?

A: It’s really interesting because, as part of the Quandamooka negotiation team, I never met with any environment groups. I don’t know whether the environment groups were meeting with the Labor Government.

The stalling of the claim in the early 2000s was because one of the families disagreed wholeheartedly with mining. But I think this was because of their own views not those of environmental groups.

Timeline of Recent Events

1996	Quandamooka people commence native title claim for Minjerribah
April 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bligh ALP Government announces mineral mining will end by 2019 and silica mining by 2025 • Stradbroke Island Sustainability and Protection Act 2011 passed • 80% of the island to become national park by 2026 and to be jointly managed by the Quandamooka people.
4 July 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Court of Australia makes native title determination in favour of Quandamooka people on a consent basis with Queensland Government • Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) between Queensland Government and Quandamooka people which includes cessation dates to mining is signed and registered. • Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) established as native title body corporate.
2011–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining company Sibelco, advised by public relations company Rowland, undertakes a political campaign pressing for extension of mining; details of campaign are in a Rowland report that wins national award for PR campaigns.
Jan 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of Opposition, Campbell Newman gives election commitment that the LNP will repeal ALP legislation and allow extension of mining.
24 March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as other activities, Sibelco spends around \$90,000 in campaigning in the Ashgrove electorate of Campbell Newman • LNP is elected to government with ALP reduced to 7 members.
November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LNP introduces amendments to the NSI Sustainability Act which would allow Sibelco to continue mining until 2035.
June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QYAC and Quandamooka representatives lodge High Court case arguing that the LNP amendments are invalid because they over-ride the ILUA made under Federal law.
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ALP opposition give election commitment that if elected to government they will repeal the LNP mining legislation and rein-state 2019 as the closure date for mineral sand mining.
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palaszczuk ALP Government formed after state election
26 May 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation passed by Parliament by ALP with support of independents to reinstate closure of mineral mining on Minjerribah by end of 2019

Q: And you were also saying, that the Bligh Government by 2009/2010, had adopted the position that it wanted to see the end of mining?

A: Yes. And had done that separately to the Quandamooka people

They'd consulted with us and I think that the Quandamooka people were always of the view of wanting to end mining. But the State had to show us what the benefit was. If the State offer wasn't going to be better than that of the Mining Company, we would have been hard-pressed because the negotiation team had to get endorsement from our community. Community was always going to ask questions of why one deal should be preferred to another.

We had to prove to the community that we had negotiated with both the State and the mining company. We had a very good negotiation team and the Bligh Government was very much wanting to align with our principles about the environment and management of country. In the end, the government were heavily invested in wanting to get this over the line. The State Government package was very good.

It is interesting that dealing with the current Labor Government over our second Native Title Claim (for Mulgumpin) has been completely different. I think it's about which factions are in power as well. Obviously, there's a left-leaning faction in power in Labor at the moment, so it has the numbers in Cabinet. It's a different vibe and a different engagement.

Q: Is it also that currently, they have more experience with dealing and settling Native Claims? Wasn't the Minjerribah claim the first claim south of the Daintree?

A: Yes. I would also say that Ministers are now very much more engaged. Back then, it was most adversarial particularly from the legal teams not wanting to give up the rights of the State. Now, it's actually about reconciliation.

In the late 2000s it felt, at times, that the State Government's negotiators were of the view to give as little as possible and get as much as they could. In a way, that's the job of a lawyer or a negotiator. But from an Aboriginal person's perspective, and looking at the history of Aboriginal people, you've got all these reconciliation policies. Except the State's representatives were leaving them outside the negotiation room.

So, for me, there were times where towards the end of the Minjerribah negotiation having Ministers come in was good because they were there to say, "Well, hang on a minute, aren't we supposed to be working with Aboriginal people." I went to a couple of meetings with Stephen Robertson² and he played a very positive role in ensuring that both parties moved forward.

Q: We've touched on the environmental groups; were any other groups giving you assistance? Any other First Nation's organisations?

A: No, it was such a new thing and in South-East Queensland there were overlapping and competing claims and a fear about how much interaction you had.

Q: What about unions. I guess the AWU was the union that covered mining workers. What about the rest of the union movement?

A: Not much happened during the court negotiation process. After the decision was made and it was clear that

mining was going to end, that's when the unions sort of came into play. The AWU was quite vocal about the end of mining, and quite antagonistic—more towards the government as opposed to the Quandamooka people.

One interesting thing from an Aboriginal perspective is that even now, with the LNP, it's almost like *terra nullius* still exists. In all their conversations around mining, there's barely a word about the Quandamooka people.

It's almost like we don't exist. It was and is all about Labor and the Greens. The LNP seem to have forgotten that there was a Native Title process where the Quandamooka people made the ultimate decision. When the LNP speak inside or outside Parliament, it's always that the Greens and Labor did a deal to end mining on the island. If they say anything, it's that the deal killed Quandamooka people's jobs and stuff like that.

It is never that the Quandamooka people made the ultimate decision. They did it and they did it through negotiations with the State and they did a bloody good deal with the State.

Q: When in the native title negotiations did the dates of closing mining get put on the table?

A: I'm not too sure. The negotiations were going to the last minute. Towards the end, it was mayhem in terms of lawyers up all hours of the morning. Right up to the close there was still politics and things to be authorised within government. A lot was new—unprecedented; for example, all the logistics about how to jointly manage a National Park. Joint management had never been done in Queensland before. Even almost 10 years later, there's no

other joint management area of national park in Queensland.

Q: So much of it was new?

A: Everyone was finding their way; everyone. We had to deal with internal politics and, obviously, the Mining Company. And working full time. We were all volunteers who had to report to our families as well and it had been going for 13 or 14 years especially for the named applicant.

It was a pretty intense time; some families were supportive, but we also had the extremes. People that were totally pro-mining and other people who would have stopped mining overnight. It also ramped up, towards the end, because some of the mining leases had actually expired.

And that was the choice for government too; Do we end mining right now or do we extend it or, if the Quandamooka people said they'd do a deal, it might go forever. Though I think that the State Government, in line with their environmental policy, wanted to end mining but obviously had to protect the mine workers. The balance was to let mining continue to 2019 and allow eight years of transition.

Q: What happens when the consent determination is made in 2011 and the 2019 closure date becomes public? And, of course QYAC comes into being?

A: It was interesting because overnight, we were managing campgrounds and jointly running National Parks and we didn't even have an office because we'd spent 16 years to just get it over the line and actually have a determination. It was like your dog's caught the tyre, what do you do now? We were focused on what do we do now.

Continued on pg20

Place and Time

Minjerribah (North Stradbroke) is the largest of the sand islands that form the outer barrier of what is now called Moreton Bay. Quandamooka Country is the land and waters of the Bay including the two large Islands of Minjerribah and Mulgumpin (Moreton Island), the islands in the Bay and the littoral between the mouth of the Logan River and the Brisbane River.

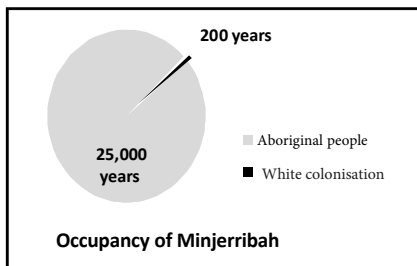
The Quandamooka people - the Ngugi, Nunukul and Gorenpul clans - have been custodians for at least 25,000 years. The British occupied Minjerribah and Mulgumpin in the 1820s at the beginning of the colonisation of Moreton Bay. Quandamooka people maintained a strong physical and cultural presence on country despite colonialism and the massacre of Ngugi people



Quandamooka Country

on Mulgumpin in 1832.

Quandamooka people lodged native title claims in 1995 and 1994 over their land and waters. On 4 July 2011, after 16 years of legal argument, the Federal Court made native title consent determinations (Quandamooka People #1 and Quandamooka People #2) covering most of North Stradbroke



Occupancy of Minjerribah
(NSIMM/Howard Guille 2013)

Island, Peel Island, Goat Island, Bird Island, Stingaree Island, Crab Island and the surrounding waters of Moreton Bay. A second consent determination was made in December 2019 covering Mulgumpin.

The Federal Court orders in 2011 were accompanied by a number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA); these included one between the Quandamooka people and the Queensland State Government and one between Quandamooka people and Redland City Council. ILUAs are made under the *Native Title Act* and registered with the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT). They can 'deal with a wide range of native title matters such as the consent to future acts, compensation, protection of

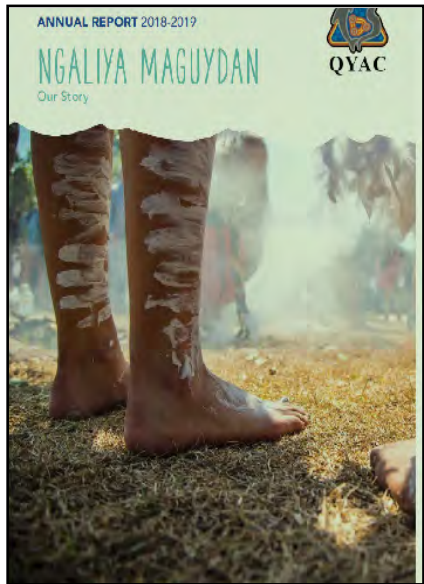


Native Title Determination 2011 (QYAC)

significant sites and culture.' Registration gives 'legal certainty and enforceability for the agreement'.¹ The ILUA between Quandamooka people and the State Government included agreement about the cessation of sand mining on areas that were to become native title lands via the consent determination.

Recognition of native title requires the establishment of a registered native title body corporate as 'a legal entity to manage and conduct the affairs of the native title holders'.² Accordingly, in accordance with the Federal Native Title Act, the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) was established.

1. National Native Title Tribunal, 'About Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)', www.nntt.gov.au/Information%20Publications/1.About%20Indigenous%20Land%20Use%20Agreements.pdf See also Graeme Neate, "Indigenous Land Use Agreements: An Overview" [1999] IndigLawB 41; (1999) 4(21) Indigenous Law Bulletin 11, <http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/IndigLawB/1999/41.html>
2. Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, 'Registered native title bodies corporate', <https://www.oric.gov.au/top-500/2015-16/RNTBCs>



QYAC Annual Report 2018-19 (<http://www.qyac.net.au/media.html>)

From page 17

We've got to get staff and an office—we weren't thinking about what potentially was coming.

Q: And then two months after the Native Title decision, the Mining Company started the biggest campaign?

A: Yes, and I guess throughout the process because of following the Native Title Act, we're thinking hey, everything's safe and secure here. We're following Australian law, registered ILUAs and all that. There wasn't any thought that anything that had gone through a process over 16 years would get undone.

But then Sibelco, the mining company, started a campaign to get a change of government. It was a massive campaign. As yet, no one has really gone into and delved enough about the relationship between the LNP and Sibelco and what transpired between them.

They funded Campbell Newman's campaign in the Ashgrove electorate, which was successful. There were ads in cinemas throughout Brisbane; letters from Aboriginal mining mothers. But, for me, even now, what they did very successfully was pretty much brainwashed the community to think that the world was going to end; the sky was going to fall-in, if mining ceased. They convinced a lot of the community including what might be called hippies and greenies who lived on the Island.

Even now, in 2020, I'm just starting to see the fog lift from people's minds; the timeline for closure has passed and, guess what, the sky hasn't fallen in. The fog is lifting because people on the Island had been brainwashed by the Mining Company and its propaganda supplied by Rowland the PR Company. Indeed, Rowland won a national award

for their campaign³ which got Campbell Newman elected in Ashgrove and the mining reinstated on the Island

That was their goal. It was a really horrible time, as well as a confusing one, for a lot of our Elders. We'd just gone 16 years, got awarded Native Title and then, all of a sudden, what's this about overturning it. We've just been through a legal process. Lawyers told us it was safe and secure and here, all of a sudden, now they're talking about extending mining again.

Q: And so, Newman gives an undertaking to Sibelco that if he's elected, they will repeal the legislation that Labor had passed setting 2019 as the closure date. He has a smashing victory. Do they talk to you at all?

A: No, that's the whole thing. It's like I say, it was like *terra nullius* again. There were no discussions with us. The Mining Company funded Campbell Newman, so why would they bother talking to us.

More than mining was involved. We had an Indigenous Land Use Agreement which stipulated many things that needed to happen in the joint management of National Parks. The brakes got put on everything; the government was completely antagonistic to us; it was a really horrible time.

Essentially, what you had was a State Government and a Mining Company trying to crush an Aboriginal Organisation that had been in existence for about six months.

Q: Where did your decision to go to the High Court come from?

A: Before the 2012 election, we had obviously weighed up what was happening, who was funding who and what's our defence if it happens?

When we caught wind that they were looking at extending mining we went to Queensland South Native Titles Services, who were our legal body.

We had briefings with one of the leading Native Title lawyers in the country, but the big question was who's going to fund it if we wanted to take it to court?

Queensland South are a federally funded body – in effect they bid for money to raise the question how, once you get Native Title, do you defend it. I think they snuck that through and got funding to help defend our ILUA before the Abbott Government replaced the ALP federally in September 2013. One thing that helped was the internal legal advice to the Newman State Government which fell off the back of a truck. It said to the Government, “Yes, it's likely extending mining will be a breach of the ILUA but it would be costly and time consuming for the Quandamooka people to defend it.”

For me, it was clear that the State Government knew what they were doing was wrong, but it was almost like, “well little Aboriginal Organisation, if you've got the time and money to take on a State Government and a Mining Company, go for it”.

Without saying it directly to us, the State was putting the brakes on other things from the ILUA and holding funding back unless we accepted the extension of sand mining.

Q: How else did you campaign as well as the legal case in the High Court?

A: Well, first and foremost, it was fracturing for us socially. We'd just been through whether mining was going to continue or not and the Government just caused the upheaval over again. We

had an Elders Council Meeting about should we take this to the High Court. They agreed and that's why we instituted proceedings. So, we had this playing out in the High Court and we were confident in our case and, at the same time, the LNP was almost Trump-like, I would say, in their arrogance in what they were doing.

The Mining Company had pretty much written and given the State the change in legislation that they wanted. Jackie Trad took it upon herself to go in and fight for the Quandamooka people. Labor had been reduced to seven members and Jackie, with everything else that was going on, took up our fight. She was on the Parliamentary Committee reviewing the legislation and even pointed out at one stage in the committee process that the legislation for the mining had a map with Sibelco's logo on it!

She was our strongest advocate and the Quandamooka people are forever grateful for that. I keep coming back to Jackie Trad as she's just been so significant in terms of her influence and outcomes for the Quandamooka people in this whole saga.

With the legal and legislative stuff happening we asked, “Well, what are we going to do”. Essentially, the answer was to become politicians and act politically ourselves. We went for a ‘*campaign of truth*’ and developed campaign materials and briefing documents leading up to the 2015 election. These went out to all parties.⁴

We developed a campaign that we even took to Ashgrove; saying, “Here's what happened. You were lied to at the last election about sand mining on Minjerribah”.

Mineral Sand Mining

The minerals ilmenite, rutile and zircon¹ have been obtained on Minjerribah since the early 1950s and have been predominately sold overseas. Silica (or white sands) have also been mined on the Island and used for glass bottle making in Brisbane and, for a period, at Lae in Papua New Guinea.

The collection of mineral sands from ocean beaches started in 1951; essentially scraping together the surface seams of dark sand. This progressed to 'dry mining' of the frontal dunes and dredge mining of the high dunes started in 1979. Dredge mining involves putting sand into a water slurry and separating the mineral in a centrifuge. Around 100 tonnes of sand is processed for each one tonne of mineral obtained. At peak around half a million tonnes of mineral were produced each year—that is about 50 million tonnes of sand dug out each year.

The process involves completely clearing vegetation and topsoil before the mining dredge creates its own lake and moves forward over the mining lease. Dredge mining uses large quantities of water and makes pits 150–200 metres deep. There have been 40 years of wet dredge mining on Minjerribah across a number of leases. The next page shows photographs taken in 2018 at Yarraman and Enterprise leases.

Mining became a big operation on Minjerribah which was the largest single source of mineral in Australia. At peak in the 1980s, some 600 people were employed including at the Pinkenbah processing plant on the mainland. Mining dominated the township of Goompi/Dunwich. Two dredge mines for mineral and one silica white sand mine were operating at the time of the native title determination in 2011. By this time all the mines were operated by one company—Sibelco Australia which was a 100 per cent owned subsidiary of the private family-owned Belgium company. In 2011 it employed around 150 people in its sand-mining operation and had an annual revenue from its entire Australian operations around \$375 million.²

Notes

1 See <https://www.sibelco.com/materials/mineral-sands/> for description and uses.

2 Information about Sibelco operations is extremely scarce as it is not stock-exchange listed. The above information comes from material presented to Parliamentary Committees and Australian Tax Office Reports on tax paid by large corporations. For revenue and tax information see <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/c2524c87-cea4-4636-acac-599a82048a26/resource/69b1061c-3769-48bd-b5a1-05e725543f6c/download/2017-18-corporate-report-of-entity-tax-information.xlsx>



Dredge Mining in the 1970s (NSIMM)



Lake created by mining at Yarraman (Howard Guille 2018)



Mining at Enterprise (Howard Guille 2018)



Quandamooka Elders Bob Anderson and Evelyn Parkin with the High Court writ challenging the Newman Governments legislation to extend sandmining on North Stradbroke Island. Picture by Naomi Moran (Koori Mail June 18 2014 p1)

A: And the Labor Government got in... They had to clean-up the mess, not only about the end of mining but also because Newman had left so many things not implemented that the Quandamooka people could have gone to court for a whole range of other things. There was so much outstanding that the Palaszczuk Government formed a Ministerial Forum to list all the things that needed to be done and get them to maturity. A lot of these things were about compensation to the Quandamooka people in terms of land being returned.

Q: Did the Palaszczuk Government announce they would legislate to repeal the LNP amendment about mining?

A: Yes; almost straight-away. But because the parliament was close, the campaign still went on. The mining company and its friends had only to change the minds of two Labor people to cross the floor and the repeal would not go through.

The Mining Company continued advocating for mining; The AWU was again supporting the Mining Company to keep mining going and not repeal the legislation. The Mining Company had got some of our mob, who were pro-mining, to start lobbying the ALP government because the repeal was going to come down to one vote. When the Labor Party set up an economic transition package for the island, the company responded with its own package and even set up a group called Jubbin which was almost a breakaway or alternative to QYAC. They were promised a whole lot of funds and opportunities.

Of course, again there was no consultation with us by the Mining Company. The Labor Government was getting peppered. Billy Gordon, in particular, was getting peppered by some of our own Aboriginal mob to cross the floor on the vote.

Up till the very night of the vote in the parliament, it was not sure whether Billy Gordon was going to vote to repeal

the legislation. But Billy did and he gave a fantastic speech. The Quandamooka people cause came down to one vote.⁵

Q: And the AWU came out publicly?

A: Publicly. In favour of mining. And at the ALP State Conference in 2016.

Q What about the rest of the Union Movement like the QCU and so on;

A: ETU didn't come out publicly, but behind the scenes it was saying we're not going to challenge mine closure in 2019. With the AWU, it was almost *terra nullius*. There was nothing from them about what the Quandamooka people wanted and authorised. There was no engagement from the AWU with us on that. It was disappointing, but we knew we had the support of Labor and it was just a bit of misbehaviour by the AWU. Maybe they were always going to stand up for their members, but it didn't assist us whatsoever and made it more difficult for us.

Q: What about the environmentalists?

A: Even though mining's finished forever some of the conservation groups are still going on about it should have been shut down in 2011. They're still pushing the line that in 2011 we let mining go for another eight years. In my view, it's a bit like the Emissions Trading Scheme; cutting off your nose to spite your face. Here we are down the track and there's no Emissions Trading Scheme because the Greens voted against it.

Very clearly, in my mind, if we had said in 2010–11 or in 2015, "No, mining's got to end now", there would have been no deal with the State because the State would have said, "We need a transition".

Whereas pragmatically, by agreeing to a transition of eight years more of mining it is finished forever. Perhaps if there was a bit more pragmatism around other environmental issues, Labor would be in power at a federal level.

But some environmentalists are now campaigning to save Straddie from QYAC, who stopped the mining; now we're the bad guys, along with Jackie Trad. We're the beasts, the devils.

Q: Where do you think QYAC is now?

A: It's amazing. It took 16 years for the first claim and four and a bit for the second claim; the current Palaszczuk Government has been so much more engaged and interested. There is a Quandamooka woman in their Cabinet and I think they're actually changing the way negotiations happen with Aboriginal people. There's a shift from being adversarial to an approach about giving back, rectifying and empowering.



*QYAC Issues briefing for 2015
Queensland Election (QYAC)*

Conflict about Sand Mining

Conflicts over sand mining on K'gari (Fraser Island) and Mulgumpin (Moreton Island) are germane to what has happened on Minjerribah. In 1976 Fraser Island sand mining was stopped by the Fraser Coalition Federal Government; the responsible environment minister was Senator Newman—father of the subsequent Queensland Premier Campbell Newman. The Fraser Government acted by refusing export permits; this was on the recommendation of an inquiry set up in 1974 by the Whitlam ALP Government which was responding to pressure from environmental groups. John Sinclair of the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation notes support from unions including the Transport Workers and the Furniture Trades.¹ Bob Henricks from the Electrical Workers has recorded his involvement in union activity against sand-mining on Fraser Island.²

The then Bjelke-Petersen Queensland Government opposed the cessation of mining on Fraser Island and gave permits for exploration and sand mining on Mulgumpin (Moreton Island). After considerable confrontation with environment groups and possibly under pressure from the Federal Government, the Bjelke-Petersen Government cancelled the permits on Mulgumpin. In 2019, Alan Sutherland, then Mayor of Moreton Bay Regional Council, noted the contribution of Bob Hawke in the 1970s, 'along with Jack Munday and Don Henry, which resulted in the black banning of sand mining activities, and to this day Moreton Island has not been mined'.³

Further mining leases were issued on Minjerribah which went on to be the largest source in Australia for mineral sands. While documentary confirmation in government or other records has not been found, strong anecdotal statements indicate that at least an informal deal was done between the state government, mining companies and some environmental groups agreeing to the continuation of mining on Minjerribah in return for the cessation on Mulgumpin.⁴

While various environmental and community groups protested about specific incidents and degradation across the 1990s–2000s, demands to cease mining on Minjerribah became more substantial in the second half of the 2000s. This culminated in an announcement by the Bligh ALP Government in 2010 that it would pass legislation requiring the end of mining. This decision was coordinated with its decision to settle the native title claim over Minjerribah.

1. John Sinclair with Peter Corris, *Fighting for Fraser Island: a man and an island. An autobiography*. Alexandria, N.S.W.: Kerr Publishing, 1994, p133
2. Bob Henricks; interview by Sue Yarrow, on Centre for the Government of Queensland, Queensland Speaks, 2011. www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/bob-henricks
3. Moreton Bay Regional Council, Minutes of General Meeting, 21 May 2019 www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au/files/assets/public/council/meetings/2019/gm20190521-minutes.pdf
4. Colin Sweett, Lines in the Sand: A History of mineral sandmining on Queensland's Barrier Islands, BA(Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 2008. See also Colin Sweett, 'Sandmining', Queensland Historical Atlas, www.qhatlas.com.au/sandmining

We've got another two Native Title claims to deal with and I've said to Ministers that we will fail if the Quandamooka people aren't self-sufficient and independent from government after these claims are done. Native Title must be about creating an environment for Aboriginal people to become independent and self-determined. We will all have failed if negotiations are so adversarial that groups, even with Native Title recognised, do not have an economic, social and cultural environment in which to build their nations.

The current government agrees—they want to see, through Native Title, that there is a glad tomorrow which ensures well-being for our children's children. The foundation for this is economic development done by and with First Nations on our lands and country. It needs business support and capacity building. But it's also about the recognition that Aboriginal people have the right to have a say at all levels about what happens on their country. They must control the planning, organising and implementing of what happens on their country.

This means a social transition for the broader community which has to accept Aboriginal people having more say on their lands. The broader community is too often showing their fear and resistance and outrage. I've been in meetings where non-Aboriginal people have said to a Minister, "Can't you stop this"; and with the Minister's replying, "I can't

an Aboriginal person what to do on their lands. So long as they comply with the planning laws, they can do what they want on their lands just like everybody else. Isn't that right?" I think that's a really good response from the Government.

Q: Is World Heritage listing of Quandamooka country going to happen?

A: Yes, there is significant commitment from QYAC and the relevant Ministers. A tentative World Heritage listing of existing Marine National Parks on Quandamooka country is the next stage.

Quandamooka country is a cultural and wildlife sanctuary and that is where I start in thinking about the whole transition from mining. Minjerribah has been a mining island for 60 years. Everyone who has moved there or lived there has a mining mindset. Now, the fog is lifting, and people are actually opening their eyes to what's around them and they're going, "Oh yes, you do have koalas and kangaroos and whales, maybe we should protect them". That means a cultural and wildlife sanctuary has got to do things about dog control and speed limits. The whole process means change and the natural process of change is always difficult, but this government is helping us.

Q: And finally, you've signed a framework agreement with the State Government and Sibelco about rehabilitation?

A: Yes. It's a pretty amazing change of attitude. The Sibelco CEO,

Tom Cutbush, and I meet pretty much monthly and also bi-monthly with the State Government to look at an orderly exit and the rehab phase. Jackie Trad triggered this change by visiting Sibelco's headquarters in Belgium when she was on a trade mission to Europe. Since then, there's been a good relationship.

We're focused on looking at innovation and research to include traditional knowledge and to become almost global leaders in rehabilitation. We've developed a Rehab and Surrender Plan, which highlights as its priorities the Quandamooka people's aspirations and cultural heritage and what we use our lands and seas for in the post-mining era.

We'll be having some difficult discussions, I think, at some stage, but the intent and the goodwill is there and it's hard because we've been beating the crap out of each other for so long and now the war's over. We've got a leader from them going yes, of course, let's sit down and work it out.

Notes

- 1 See *Quandamooka People #1 v Queensland* [2002] FCA 259 (6 March 2002)
- 2 Stephen Robertson was Minister for Health 2005–2009 and Minister for Energy and Water Utilities 2009–2012
- 3 The Rowland report is: *Achieving social, environmental and economic progress in an island community: sand mining and its benefits on North Stradbroke Island*. A copy of the Rowland report is available at <https://app.box.com/s/jlmp63q9lemoj3r1i5quf6z373zpgkoc>
- 4 QYAC, 2015 Issues briefing for the Queensland Government and Parliament.
- 5 The vote on 25 May 2016 was 42/41 in favour of repealing the LNP legislation. Billy Gordon was the Member for Cook; elected as an ALP candidate but by 2016 an independent. A Barbarrum man, he ended his speech on the mining legislation with the words:

The Quandamooka people have bled long enough. They have cried long enough. Their wait is now over. Today, the Quandamooka people will no longer be beggars at the gates of their own kingdom. Rather, they will be masters of their own dreaming.

(Hansard 25 May 2016 pp 2110–1)

The *Osterley* Germans: Socialist Working-Class Migrants in 1910

Andrew G. Bonnell

When I was researching German Social Democrats who migrated to Australia before the First World War, I sought the advice of Ray Evans on Queensland. There were established associations of German workers in Adelaide and Melbourne in the late nineteenth century, but German socialist influence was harder to trace in Queensland. Ray kindly pointed me to a reference in his book *Loyalty and Disloyalty* to a shipload of German working-class immigrants to Queensland in 1910, aboard the RMS *Osterley*, whose “Red Flag celebration” held on May Day resulted in “the conservative Brisbane press” reacting “with a full-blown anti-alien, anti-radical outburst”.¹ The *Osterley* incident is worth recalling, and not only as an example of the “anti-alien” and “anti-radical” hysteria that seems to grip sections of the Australian population every generation or so (the “Fenian” scare in the 1880s, and the “Red Scare” after both world wars). It also exemplifies the ways in which the Australian labour movement could have been enriched by the importation of socialist ideas from abroad, a potential development that was cut short by the outbreak of the First World War.²

Evans’ brief reference to the *Osterley* May Day incident could be added to in a couple of directions. Firstly, his account does not make it clear that the May Day demonstration in question happened

aboard the ship, *en route* to Australia, so that the episode caused consternation in Australia even before the Germans’ arrival in Brisbane. Secondly, the press coverage (and outrage) was not limited to the Brisbane *Courier*, or to Queensland, for that matter.

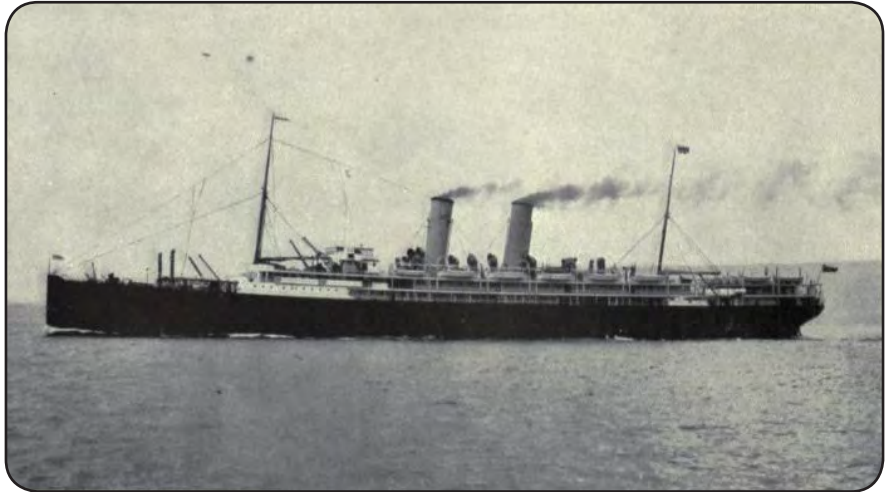
The *Osterley*’s first Australian port was Fremantle, and the first account of the May Day celebration appeared in the West Australian press. The report in the *West Australian* of 18 May 1910 appears to have formed the basis of much subsequent reporting and commentary, and is thus worth quoting *in extenso* here:

“UNDER THE RED FLAG.”

A PECULIAR MAILBOAT INCIDENT.

GERMAN SOCIALISTS’ DEMONSTRATION.

During the voyage of the R.M.S. *Osterley* between Suez and Colombo the Red Flag of Socialism waved triumphantly over the third-class deck, and for the time being the more conservative passengers expressed themselves as indignant when, the strains of such airs as ‘The Marseillaise were shouted about the decks. The occasion was the celebration of May Day – May 1–



Steamship Osterley, Unknown photographer—1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 24, pg. 889, Plate VIII

by a band of about 100 German immigrants for Queensland.

From inquiries made on board it would appear that prior to the end of April the Germans approached the commander of the mailboat with a request that on May 1 they might be granted permission to observe some celebrations, the purpose of which was not apparently anything more than honouring some national festivities. The sanction was readily given; Commander Jenks presumably thinking that the incident would lend some relief to the monotony of the voyage and afford the passengers some entertainment. On May 1, however, the full import of the celebrations was manifest, and under the red flag the Germans.

aided in a very few instances by some others, conducted a 'red hot' socialistic demonstration on the most conventional lines. They were garbed in varied costumes, with the red badges and ribbons predominating. Fieri speeches of the customary 'agin the Government' type heard at May Day celebrations were delivered and tolerated by those of their fellow-passengers to whom the proceedings did not cause annoyance. When, however, with gesticulations and stamping of feet the air of 'The Marseillaise'³ was struck up and repeated some of the passengers were indignant, and it is understood that something in the nature of a counter demonstration, where the National Anthem was a predominating factor, took place

in the third class. The socialists, however, shortly afterwards ceased their demonstration, and on the rest of the voyage were treated with more or less coolness by their fellow-passengers. It is understood that the German immigrants, the majority of whom cannot speak a word of English, are travelling on nominated passages, having been duly nominated by Germans in Australia. On the payment of the nomination fees the Queensland authorities have nothing to do but find a passage out to Australia, having simply to satisfy themselves that the would-be immigrants are physically sound. According to the Queensland regulations governing the acceptance of immigrants so nominated, the officials in London have no authority to exercise discretion in the direction of rejecting would-be immigrants on the score of undesirability for any reason other than physical unfitness. 'It seems to me,' said one passenger, 'that Queensland has imported a crowd of seething socialists of a type certainly not desirable in any Australian State. There are quite enough rabid socialists of the kind that Labourists, Conservatives, and others have no sympathy with, without practically paying men like these to come out. It has been openly stated and has been given credence that these people are armed to the teeth, having not only knives and revolvers but

rifles and ammunition. If that is so—well, it should not be.'⁴

The *West Australian's* consternation at the importation of "seething socialists", who were "armed to the teeth" to boot, set the tone for much of the subsequent press commentary on the incident. The *Sydney Star* carried a brief factual paragraph on the May Day celebration, but devoted a longer report to the "excellent type" of immigrant that the Germans represented: a "fine stamp" of people, generally of "fine appearance", their behaviour on the whole had been excellent. They were even described as "the best lot of immigrants who have ever touched here", and as "an upright, sturdy-looking lot of miners, agriculturists, and dairy men, all bound for Queensland to augment the various German colonies that have been formed in that State".⁵

The line about "seething socialists" spread to Adelaide,⁶ Melbourne,⁷ Sydney,⁸ Brisbane,⁹ and the Queensland regional press (which described the German socialists as "red-hot" as well as "seething").¹⁰ To add to the alarm about the "seething revolutionists", news got out that a revolver was accidentally discharged during the May Day celebration, wounding a steward in the arm. However, it was also reported by a passenger that the revolver shot was "purely accidental, as a subsequent enquiry proved": "It might have happened to anybody", the passenger was quoted as saying (carrying firearms on board a passenger ship does not appear to have been that unusual in itself in this period).¹¹

After a few days of this kind of publicity, the former Agent-General of

Queensland, Sir Horace Tozer, felt the need to reassure the public (presumably wishing to maintain confidence in the immigration policies). By chance, Tozer had been on board the *Osterley* and had witnessed the May Day celebration (and the revolver shot). Tozer declared that the “incident has been exaggerated”. On the whole, the May Day celebration was “quietly conducted”: “There was nothing rebellious in the celebration, and the passengers were not interfered with in any way”. The German immigrants “seem to be a good class of people”, although “possibly extremist in their views upon Socialistic questions”. In any case, there was little that could be done about them, because they had been nominated by “friends in Queensland” and subsequently sent out to Queensland by Tozer’s successor as Agent-General, Major Robinson, who under the nominated immigrant scheme had no discretion other than making sure that the immigrants were “physically fit”. This, Tozer, suggested, was a weakness in the scheme, possibly foreshadowing a review.¹²

More facts about the *Osterley* Germans emerged: they had transhipped as a group (totalling 110 Germans out of 127 Government immigrants on board) from Bremen to London before boarding the *Osterley* for Australia, departing on 15 April 1910. Two other ships were headed to Queensland at the same time, the *Perthshire* (with mainly British immigrants on board) and the North German Lloyd vessel the *Seydlitz*, carrying another 234 German immigrants to Queensland, making a total of 701 immigrants on the three ships.¹³ According to press reports, there were 33 German families on the *Osterley*,

of which 28 were socialist and 5 non-socialist.¹⁴

On 26 May, the *Osterley* docked in Sydney. The publicity given to the May Day festivities between Suez and Colombo alerted Sydney’s international socialist community to the arrival of German comrades (or as the weekly *International Socialist* paper sarcastically put it, “the threatened invasion of Australia by German Socialists voyaging on the *Osterley*”), and a cordial reception was arranged for them on their stopover on the way to Brisbane.¹⁵ A delegation that included Harry Holland, the general secretary of the Socialist Federation of Australia, and Heinrich Dierks, the liquor and hospitality trade unionist who had been active for years in the International Socialist Club, and other like-minded comrades, welcomed the *Osterley* Germans to Sydney. The immigrants were reported to have been highly amused by the press coverage of their actions on the voyage.¹⁶ According to their version of events, they had sought and obtained permission from the captain to hold their celebration on the third-class upper deck, whereupon:

They had a small photo of August Bebel, bordered with red, and two small red Hags, each about 6 x 4 inches, fixed on the deck house. Some of the comrades delivered addresses, and resolutions were carried affirming the adherence of all present to the Socialist cause. After a few songs the meeting closed, but they forgot to remove the picture and the flags straight away. A British jingo fellow-passenger, who evidently — like the proverbial mad bull — does

not like the red, tore the little flags down, and put up a notice announcing divine service at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, with this written underneath: 'We will give you the rest'.

Incensed at the insult, the Socialists tore this notice down, and after first giving the offender a talking to, complained to the captain.

Both the captain and Sir Horace Tozer had testified to the good behaviour of the socialists on board.¹⁷ On their own account, these dangerous revolutionaries conducted themselves in a very orderly fashion.

The *Osterley* Germans enjoyed the hospitality of Sydney's international socialists on the Thursday and Friday night of their stay in Sydney, with singing (revolutionary songs in both English and German) and dancing. The German comrade Schaeffer responded to the Sydney socialists' welcoming remarks with a speech (with Dierks acting as interpreter), in which he invoked Marx's dictum "Workers of the World Unite" and gave an account of the German Social Democrats' then current protest movement against the discriminatory three-class franchise of the state of Prussia. The Sydney socialists farewelled the *Osterley* at the Orient wharf on the Saturday, full of the "conviction that the loss of Germany and of New South Wales is Queensland's gain".¹⁸

On 30 May 1910, the *Osterley* finally arrived in Brisbane. The *Brisbane Telegraph* made an effort to reassure its readers that the immigrants were of good stock after all:

All of the immigrants appeared to be in good health and spirits, and capable of doing their fair share of the development of the potentialities of this vast State. [...] These people are destined for the Gladstone district, where it is understood they will take up land. The suggestion that there were red-hot Socialists amongst them was ridiculed by those of them who were spoken to upon the subject.¹⁹

Another reporter wrote:

As the stately ship *Osterley* slowly swung to her berth at Pinkenba, many curious eyes searched the decks for the so-called 'red ragers' or German socialists. From the telegraphed reports of the doings of the Teutonic immigrants, which embraced the display of revolvers on crowded decks, disloyal and violent utterances, and general rowdiness — one expected to light upon a band of ferocious and heavily-armed ruffians. The appearance of the new arrivals, however, wholly belied the unmerited reputation which had preceded them. Clean, healthful, orderly, and serviceably, if not fashionably clothed, the Immigrants, who totalled one hundred and ten men, women, and children, quietly and intelligently watched the scene of bustle which presented itself, and exhibited the liveliest interest in as much of their new homeland as they could see from the decks of the steamer. And an inquiry

among the officers of the ship confirmed the good impression formed of the strangers.

Once again, Sir Horace Tozer was called on for a character reference: although there may have been “one or two recalcitrants” among the contingent, “one swallow does not make a summer”, the German socialists were “not as black as painted”, and “I think they will make good citizens”.²⁰ The naïve response of journalists who expected to find “ferocious and heavily-armed ruffians” disembarking from the *Osterley* partly reflects the crude stereotyping of socialist radicals in the press. It may also partly be a reaction to the respectable and disciplined habitus cultivated by the skilled and organized workers who made up the backbone of the German Social Democratic party.

Some of the *Osterley* Germans had been active in the Fourth Reichstag Electoral District of Berlin, which was located in the city’s working-class East End, a stronghold of the radical left of the party. Members of the Fourth Electoral District party organisation had a track record of staunch opposition to the authoritarian state of Imperial Germany and to imperialism, and also resisted revisionist and reformist tendencies within the Social Democratic Party. Four party members of the Fourth District- Albert Beckmann, Karl Miethke, Max Schäffer (presumably the same Schäffer who gave a speech to the international socialists in Sydney) and Karl Woldt – sent back news of the *Osterley* May Day celebration to their comrades back in Berlin. They also kept in touch subsequently, sending their condolences on the death of the popular Social Democratic Reichstag deputy Paul Singer in 1911, and asking

to be kept informed of developments back in Germany.²¹

It would be an interesting project to try to trace the itineraries of some of the *Osterley* Germans (sources permitting) to see how many became active in the labour movement of Queensland, and to what extent they brought a different perspective, schooled in German Marxism and internationalism, to the more trade-unionist Queensland labour organisations with a strong “White Australia” orientation. The time in which they could have had an influence was only brief, as it turned out – some may have been interned when war broke out, and others, as Evans pointed out, suffered boycott and discrimination from fellow workers during the war.²² The internationalist socialist strands of the labour movement in Australia had to be reconstituted after the First World War, when they were partially in the shadow of the backlash against the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Evans, *Loyalty and Disloyalty. Social conflict on the Queensland homefront, 1914–18*, Sydney, London & Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p.43. For context on German Social Democrats in Australia before 1914, see Andrew G. Bonnell, “Transnational Socialists? German Social Democrats in Australia before 1914”, *Itinerario*, Vol.37, 1, April 2013, pp.101–113. One notable German socialist in Brisbane in the early 1900s was (Ernst) Hugo Kunze, who was a prominent comrade of Ernie Lane in the Social Democratic Vanguard. See my paper, “From Saxony to South Brisbane: the German-Australian socialist Hugo Kunze”, in Melanie Nolan, ed., *Labour History and its People*. (The 12th Biennial National Labour History Conference, Australian National University

- 15–17 September 2011), (Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra Region Branch and National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, Canberra, 2011), pp.299–309.
- 2 On the socialist wing of the Australian labour movement in its formative decades (and the role of foreign socialists in the movement), see particularly Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time'. Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885–1905*, Sydney, London & Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987.
 - 3 One of the most popular songs of the German Social Democratic labour movement was the “Workers’ Marseillaise”, with German verses set to the tune of the French original.
 - 4 *West Australian*, 18 May 1910, p.4.
 - 5 “May Day Celebrated At Sea”, *Star* (Sydney), 18 May 1910, p.7 and *ibid.*, “Immigrants By The Osterley. An Excellent Type”, p.3.
 - 6 “Immigrants and the Red Flag”, *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 19 May 1910, p.7.
 - 7 “Imported Socialists”, *Argus* (Melbourne), 19 May 1910, p.4.
 - 8 “Seething Socialists”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 May 1910, p.10.
 - 9 *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 19 May 1910, p.7.
 - 10 “Red Hot Socialists”, *Gympie Times and Mary River Mining Gazette*, 19 May 1910, p.3; “Red Hot Socialists”, *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser*, 20 May 1910, p.2.
 - 11 *Daily Herald* (Adelaide), 23 May 1910, p.4.
 - 12 “German Socialists. The Osterley Incident. Statement by Sir H. Tozer”, *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1910, p.6; “The Osterley Incident”, *Brisbane Courier*, 27 May 1910, p.5; see also *Northern Miner* (Charters Towers), 23 May 1910, p.4. Tozer’s statement was also reported in other states’ newspapers.
 - 13 “Immigrants By The Osterley. An Excellent Type”, *Star*; “Immigrants for Queensland”, *Brisbane Courier*, 27 May 1910, p.5.
 - 14 “Osterley’s Passengers”, *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 27 May 1910, p.7. The same report appears in *Queensland Times*, 28 May 1910, p.4.
 - 15 H. Dierks, “The Socialist Immigrants”, *International Socialist* (Sydney), 4 June 1910, p.4.
 - 16 “Osterley’s Passengers”, *Telegraph* (which refers to Holland as Holt). Dierks was another socialist of German origins.
 - 17 Dierks, “The Socialist Immigrants”. August Bebel (1840–1913) was the long-standing leader of the German Social Democratic party.
 - 18 Dierks, “The Socialist Immigrants”. A translation of Schaeffer’s speech was printed in *International Socialist*, 11 June 1910, p.3. Interestingly, Schaeffer noted that the reading room of the International Socialists contained a copy of the German Social Democratic party newspaper *Vorwärts*, albeit one that was two months old, illustrating the difficulties in keeping up with news of politics in Europe from Australia.
 - 19 *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 31 May 1910, p.9.
 - 20 “German Socialists. Arrive By The Osterley”, *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser*, 1 June 1910, p.2.
 - 21 Landesarchiv Berlin, A. Pr. Br. Rep 30 Berlin C, Polizei-Präsidium, Nr.15795, Akten der Abteilung VII-4 des Kgl. Polizei-Präsidiums zu Berlin, betreffend Australien, 1911–1916, Bl.2, with cutting from the *Mitteilungsblatt* (newsletter) of the 4th electoral district, 12 April 1911. For political police reports on the 4th electoral district, see *ibid.*, Nr.14145–14149.
 - 22 Evans, *Loyalty and Disloyalty*, pp.49–50.

Centralisation in Three Australian Unions

John Martin

It is well known that unions in Australia have suffered a decline in membership and influence in the past quarter-century. This decline is attributed to environmental factors such as structural change in the labour market, anti-union governments and concerted employer campaigns to remove union presence and influence. One response to the decline in membership and the changed environment in which unions operate has been the centralisation of leadership and administration in unions. This article considers the centralisation of powers and functions within three large Australian unions, White Collar Union 1 (WCU1); White Collar Union 2 (WCU2) and Blue Collar Union (BCU). In all three, declining membership motivated the centralisation of functions. This restructuring was also inextricably linked to the shift in control of the Australian industrial relations system to the Commonwealth and the adoption of the organising model as a renewal strategy.

Background

Enterprise bargaining was introduced in the early 1990s as the primary source of wage settlement in Australia. This shift was motivated, amongst other reasons, to appease the militant unions and their members

who were restrained from making claims by the Accord. It is now history that enterprise bargaining has been problematic for Australian unions and may well have further contributed to the continued decline in membership as unions struggled with the resources required to operate effectively in such a decentralised system. The associated bargaining structures are a relevant factor in determining unions' structures, particularly for those unions facing national employers.

At the same time, structural change within the labour market manifested in privatisation, outsourcing, deregulation and the increasing prevalence of precarious and non-standard forms of employment. These factors, too, undermined union organising and contributed to membership decline.

The Howard Government accelerated the decentralisation of wage setting and simultaneously removed considerable institutional support for unions generally through legislative amendment. Right of entry for union officials was made more difficult by the legislation and such provisions were enforced rigorously by many employers. Other employer-provided assistance such as providing payroll deductions was also removed. An early response to the decline in membership was the process of amalgamation that allowed a larger

organisation to expand its membership by expanded coverage. The existence, emergence or threat of an anti-union regime also gave unions motivation to amalgamate. A cohesive union movement would also assist in the development of corporatist policies. A small number of highly coordinated unions would provide for much easier cooperation with the state as was a hallmark of the Accord era in Australia. However, amalgamation did not provide the bulwark against the tide of economic, political and industrial vicissitudes facing the Australian trade union movement.

A more recent strategy has been the adoption of the organising model that emphasises empowerment of members and campaigning about collective issues; a process by which unionism is reinvigorated by a concentration on the recruitment and active involvement of members and delegates (or activists) at a workplace level and which focuses on those matters that are within the union's control.

Membership Decline in Three Unions

A substantial and on-going decline in membership has been experienced by all the unions covered by this research. Between the early 1990s and 2014, the WCU1 experienced a concerning 41% reduction and the BCU some 21.3%. Both pale into insignificance compared to the massive decline suffered by the WCU2. WCU2 had a membership of almost 120,000 when the amal-

gamation process was completed in 1994. Consistent declining membership has resulted in the WCUs going from being the largest of the three unions considered by this research to becoming the smallest of the three unions, by quite a margin, with a membership base of fewer than 40,000 by 2014.

Structural change to industry and the application of broader neoliberal policies mean that the problems of low pay, technological change and job insecurity are now shared by WCU1 and WCU2 members as well as those in BCU.

Up until the 1990s, the system of arbitration provided Australian unions with recognition and legal protection. In addition, employers historically adopted a passive and sometimes benevolent attitude to unions. Closed shop arrangements existed in several industry sectors for most of the 1970s and 1980s. For most of the 20th century, all the unions covered by the research had a favourable political and industrial environment.

The removal of institutional support for Australian trade unions contributed to the decline in membership. Even the more historically militant BCU, and its predecessors, relied upon the arbitration system for its automatic recognition and access to tribunals to complement its industrial campaigns. Industrial disputes in the various industries covered by the BCU's predecessors often triggered arbitrated outcomes and/or ratified agreements reached with employers.

Changing attitudes from employers and governments were experienced

by the BCU and the inability to 'close a shop' following the Workplace Relations Act 1996, made organising for BCU increasingly difficult, and combined to reduce the BCU levels of membership in its traditional sphere.

The Organising Model and Centralisation

Organising both as a philosophy and practice is contrasted with 'servicing', which largely refers to specific issues undertaken on behalf of individual members. Critical to the successful application of the organising model, in the mind of its advocates, is the separation of servicing. A common theme is the impact on the workload of organisers. By continuing to service members, organisers are unable to build union power at a workplace and recruit new members.

The centralisation of functions and powers within these unions was a direct result of both the pressure of declining membership combined with adopting the organising model. Fundamental to the strategy of centralisation is the shared services that could be centrally located, such as the use of one call centre to answer all member enquiries (irrespective of the state in which the member is located) from a central location, and all the unions covered by the research did this. Not only did this centralised call centre release organisers from servicing, it provided for economies of scale by not having to replicate these call centres in every jurisdiction. Economies of scale were also obtained from other administrative functions,

such as payroll. Interviewees described state-based officials as being freed from the administrative burdens that would have absorbed considerable branch resources had these functions not been centralised.

In accordance with the organising model, resources obtained from the economies of scale and splitting of functions were reinvested in organising and the recruitment of new members. Organisers were freed to concentrate on the development of activists at a workplace level. The organising model requires significant resources to be devoted to campaigning and recruitment functions. Particularly when dealing with national employers, there is a strategic advantage for unions to be able to deploy resources to maximise campaigning outcomes.

The incapacity of, or refusal by, existing state leaderships to embrace renewal strategies undoubtedly played a part in the decision to abolish state branches of BCU and centralise its functions. Likewise, the heavy reliance of WCU1 on arbitral tribunals made the transition to an organising approach difficult for some officials who had come from an industrial background. WCU2 experienced contested national elections that were fought and won on the pace and direction towards the adoption of an organising approach by the national organisation. In the very frank opinion of one witness:

we were having the discussions about the organising model and what did it mean and...

I tinkered with it and played with it but really it was, I wasn't a good user of that technique and... the more effective use of it sort of came after I was moved from being a full time official. (Interview 2011)

The decline in the power of tribunals coincided with the introduction of enterprise bargaining as the primary means of setting wages and conditions in the Australian industrial relations system. Enterprise bargaining was problematic for the white-collar unions which lacked the industrial muscle to compel employers to bargain and the measurement of productivity was difficult in an industry in which effective service rather than efficiency was paramount. When engaging major national employers, it is essential that resources can be strategically allocated where they are needed. A 'seven-headed monster' being controlled by state secretaries is not as able to adapt or be controlled from a central level. When national campaigns are the primary strategy of the union, this central control of resources appears to be inevitable. Respondents pointed to the ability to quickly allocate resources where they are needed, by the direction of the federal office, rather than having to go to the state secretaries 'cap in hand' to seek approval to allocate resources. For example, one witness explained the necessity of national consistency thus:

...we can't really run an effective national campaign ... unless we've got some

divisional control of the organising resources rather than coming to the branch secretaries and asking them to assign some of their organisers to these campaigns because the branch secretary may have a divergent view from the divisional leadership about the appropriate allocation of those organising resources. (Interview 2011)

The Implications for Union Governance

The most significant argument against the centralisation of functions is the concentration of power that it entails. In a very similar way to the literature critical of union amalgamation, the concentration of power can be viewed as being contrary to be the best interests of members. WCU1 respondents were critical of the restructure that potentially had the impact of stifling, trivialising or ignoring local campaigning issues. This concentration of power has the potential for eliminating organic campaigns and for those determining priorities at a central level to have little regard for those matters of concern to people in remote locations. One witness considered the centralisation of campaigning as having a negative impact on local campaigns:

I saw a number of instances where people did get organised at that local level and then actually the divisional head came in and squashed things or people got in trouble for almost

running their own campaigns.
(Interview 2011)

In all three cases the restructures eventuated in the abolition of state branches, albeit partially in the case of BCU. To place this into perspective one needs to consider the historic purpose of state branches of unions. The existence of several industrial jurisdictions, with their own rules and idiosyncrasies, would have necessitated officials with industrial skills located in capital cities where tribunals are located. These skills would have become less necessary over time, firstly with the weakening of the tribunal jurisdictions generally with the move to enterprise bargaining, and ultimately with the takeover of private sector industrial relations by the Commonwealth, against the wishes of the various state Labor governments.

In this context of a declining relevance of state jurisdictions, it is hardly surprising that the unions that have effected the restructure, that virtually abolished state branches, are all operating exclusively within the federal jurisdiction. Unions not suffering a decline in membership are less likely to restructure. As it turns out, some of those unions not suffering a decline in membership also have substantial or exclusive membership with state governments and therefore a significant presence in what remains of the various state jurisdictions. Similarly, the requirement for a presence in the state tribunal will make the abolition of state branches unlikely in those unions still requiring such a presence.

BCU is the most recent union converting to full coverage federally by virtue of the WorkChoices take over. It is noteworthy however, that both the head office of the BCU and its principal industries are located in Victoria. Victoria was the first state to transfer all its industrial relations power to the Commonwealth in 1996.²

The literature concerning the WorkChoices legislation has mainly focused on the content of the legislation rather than the long-lasting implications for the various industrial jurisdictions, with some notable exceptions. The demolition of state jurisdictions was collateral damage caused by a Howard Government intent on a reform agenda having maximum impact and application. The Liberal Party was traditionally the defender of states rights and the abrogation of this position by the Howard Government made both major Australian political parties centralists. Indeed, these actions by the Howard Government were to have profound, far-reaching and quite possibly unintended consequences. A finding of this research is that one such consequence, whether intended or not, was the breaking down of traditional coverage granted to certain unions by the award coverage, eligibility rule and respective history within a state jurisdiction.

Another unintended consequence may have been the abolition of state branches and, subsequently, the positions of state branch secretaries. It is doubtful that this concept was even considered by the Howard Government when WorkChoices

was introduced. However, given the propensity of the Howard Government to gut the state jurisdictions because of their favourable legislative regimes for unions over such matters as bargaining and union encouragement, it is consistent that the federal regulation of unions through a system of registration would have been considered favourably. Recent amendments to the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009 by the Turnbull Government indicate a desire to control (and potentially punish) union activity at a central level.

Federal industrial regulation is a precursor to all the restructures being considered by the research. All three unions have a long history of federal coverage. This observation is consistent with the centralisation of power becoming more prevalent for unions which have predominantly federal coverage and decreasing membership. The centralisation of power is a potential side effect of the use of the Corporations Power to provide the Commonwealth with the constitutional coverage of industrial relations.

The union governance implications are profound. State branches and a system of dual registration have been a feature for most unions since very early in the 20th century. All states, except Western Australia, have handed over their non-incorporated private sector following the seizure of the industrial regulation of incorporated employers by the Howard Government. The ACT and Northern Territory are completely covered by the federal system and

Victoria handed over its entire jurisdiction more than 20 years ago. One wonders if other state governments will also seek to divest themselves of the expense and political intrigue of their own industrial jurisdictions. It does, however, tilt the balance of power towards the head office of the respective organisations, some of which currently exercise very little control over state branches of their union.

The structure of the unions in question was altered in favour of a central domination over state jurisdictions. This shift in power was undoubtedly influenced by the introduction of the organising model and the exclusive federal regulation of the unions in question. The centralisation of function has substantial implications for the governance of unions, particularly if, as predicted, other unions will adopt a more centralised model.

The WCU1 restructure took place in three phases between 1996 and 2005. By no means was it part of a grand plan or even pre-determined. One restructure followed the next and they became a natural extension of one another. It took time because of the democratic processes adopted to convince those with a vote of the merit of the respective proposals. The WCU2 restructure was largely guided by the WCU1 restructure. BCU respondents made no reference to other unions, however the resemblance of the restructures is still remarkable.

The criticisms of the amalgamation process are relevant to restructures as the same concerns for alienation of

membership are repeated. However, very few, if any, respondents see the amalgamation process as anything other than a necessity that enabled the Australian union movement to survive the deleterious effect of an on-going decline in union membership, and the increasing hostile political and industrial environment in which unions find themselves. Moreover, in the case of WCU1 and WCU2, the structural difference of the occupations and industries covered by these unions differs greatly compared to the period prior to the amalgamation process; so much so that some of those structural differences no longer exist.

The restructures of all three unions also resulted in the centralisation of a range of administrative functions. The restructures were aimed at economies of scale and improved purchasing power at a national level. The restructures also removed a layer of bureaucracy and allowed an information flow to members on national lines, and with it a clearer demarcation of the respective responsibilities of officials. In the case of BCU, the less-populated branches had also become a financial drain on the national union.

In the case of the WCU1 and BCU, the new positions at a state level were also appointed rather than elected and came under the direction of the national union. There is little doubt that this was a deliberate change to the balance of power within the organisation that was intended to ensure compliance with national campaign strategies. Examples within the WCU1 and BCU emerged

of existing elected state secretaries who were not a good fit with organising strategies. Either content with servicing existing unionised sites or uncomfortable with making recruitment of new members a priority, some existing elected officials were seen by their national organisations as impediments to the implementation of organising strategies.

By contrast, the WCU2 maintained an election for the leader of the union at a state level. The WCU2 closely followed the WCU1 in the restructure but considered that the appointment rather than election of a state secretary position did not serve the best interests of democracy within the WCU2. On balance, it is difficult to argue with the logic of the WCU2 case and in the driving desire to maximise campaigning capacity, it could be argued that democracy was at least partly a casualty.

The perception of matters that are important to union members in regional areas being shelved by capital city paid officials can be contradictory to objectives set by other renewal strategies, such as the organising model. However, what is more important than any rule change or union structure is the culture that permeates a union. A culture of allowing union members to make decisions and empowering them through education will be the best defence against any oligarchic tendency.

As with the other union renewal strategies, the restructures were driven from the top down. As with amalgamation and the adoption

of the organising model, the restructures were not asked for by the membership. However, there is no evidence of on-going concern or opposition to the restructures in any of the three unions. Rank and file members have their jobs and lives to think about rather than focus on the structure of their union.

It is significant, however, that some respondents who were initially opposed to the restructures are now converted to their respective merits. The removal of a state branch of a union sounds concerning, particularly to those who have spent a lifetime working for and supporting that branch structure. The reality is, however, that it is merely a structure and for the three unions covered by this research, perhaps an antiquated structure. These unions still require a presence in state and territory capital cities, as they do in major provincial centres throughout Australia. Bargaining structures imposed by legislative change and in some cases employers, remove the need for a state branch in the case of unions whose entire coverage is now in the federal system. Results have been forthcoming from the restructures and the WCU1 and BCU have been able to stabilise membership levels since the restructure. The WCU2, it would appear, has a more difficult challenge ahead of it in terms of membership. Nonetheless the WCU2 has survived and some respondents have no doubt this would not have been the case without the restructure. Several respondents discussed the restructure of the WCU2 in terms of its survival as an organisation.

Centralisation certainly has the capacity to further objects of union renewal strategies. It is evident that a national system of industrial relations for the private sector, along with technological advances, permits the effective operation of an Australian union from a central location in a way that simply would not have been possible in a forgone era. Moreover, the propensity for unions to become increasingly concerned with their limited resources means that this increased ability to centralise functions and achieve economies of scale will be irresistible. In addition, centralised functions provide the demonstrable capacity for improved quality and consistency of providing services to members.

However, the centralisation of functions brings with it a centralisation of power. The ruthless application of the cultural change needed for implementation of an organising strategy demands total compliance, particularly for unions dealing with national employers in a national industrial relations system. There is a danger in matters of priority for regions being ignored at a central level where important decisions are made. The capacity for regional members to feel that their voices are heard within the national union is important and needs attention to ensure the union maintains relevance outside of the major capital cities.

If the primary reason for a restructure to centralise functions is a declining membership base, it is logical that unions that are not experiencing declining membership would not be inclined to change

anything let alone existing and well-functioning state branches ceding power to a central organisation. It is obvious that many Australian unions are not in any immediate danger from declining membership and are therefore unlikely to centralise power and/or functions at this point in time. Coincidentally, some of those unions continue to deal with large state-based employers. Their federal organisations therefore more resemble a loose federation rather than highly centralised organisations.

Much of the motivation for centralisation has come from the adoption of policies associated with the organising model. Not all unions are adherents to the organising model and there is less than full support within academia for the organising model of recent times. The organising model has not delivered the reversal to declining union density that might have been hoped for in Australia, and other nations, particularly the USA. That is not to say that membership numbers within unions have not stabilised in recent years and this might be in some way attributable to change in culture within unions that places emphasis on recruitment of new members. Given the amount of resources and effort that has been put into centralising functions to date, it is unlikely that such a significant policy shift would be reversed soon.

The final and most decisive factor to influence the centralisation of union activities and power is the takeover of private sector industrial relations by the Commonwealth. The election of a subsequent federal Labor Government in 2007

did not bring about a reversal of the takeover undertaken by the Howard Government by using the Corporations Power but rather saw the transfer to the Commonwealth of the remaining private sector by all but one state government. It is a matter of time, perhaps a long time, until further state governments, in the same way as Victoria, transfer their industrial relations powers to Commonwealth in full. A further centralisation of industrial relations powers would bring a greater propensity for the centralisation of governance for more unions.

This article is derived from PhD research undertaken at Griffith University.

The details of the trade unions concerned were removed in this article to protect confidentiality.

A full bibliography for this article can be sourced from John:
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Notes

1 Seven-headed monster refers to organisations with disparate branches in every state and territory.

2 *Commonwealth Powers (Industrial Relations) Act 1996 (Vic)*.

The Merchant Navy and Australian Emigration

Editors note - The text of this article originally appeared in the 7 March 1850 edition of *The Morning Chronicle*, written by **Henry Mayhew** as part of his longstanding series 'Labour and the Poor.' The article describes the state of the British merchant navy and interviews British seamen about conditions aboard ship for themselves and for emigrants to Australia.

I propose occupying myself by inquiring into the condition, earnings and treatment of the men belonging to the Mercantile marine...

(It may be) safely asserted that the mercantile marine of the British Empire consists, in round numbers, of 34,000 vessels, of 4,000,000 tons burden and manned by 240,000 seamen, who are annually engaged in transporting to and from this country (*the British Isles*) merchandise to the value of upwards of 75 million of pounds sterling (*approximately AU\$20bn adjusting for inflation to 2019*)...

The reckless and improvident character of sailors, and the peculiar nature of their service, coupled with a consideration of their vast importance to our national welfare, have long induced both the Legislature and Courts of Justice to treat them differently from other labourers, to dictate the form of their contracts, and to construe those contracts in a peculiar manner. So long ago as the reign of George II, an Act was passed requiring that seamen's articles should be in

writing, and should contain particulars of the voyage and of the amount of wages...

The Mercantile Marine Bill (is) now before the House of Commons... It is my object (to ascertain

the views) of the men mainly interested, as to the necessity for, or the benefits likely to accrue from, the proposed measure. I shall restrict myself merely to the collecting of evidence...

In the present letter I have space only for an exposition of the state of the seaman on board the Australian ships

Upon this subject a man who was much more than bronzed – as he was actually red in the face and neck – gave me the following statement. He had



Image taken from the 1861 edition of London Labour and the London Poor in Post-Proofing at www.pgdp.net

free and jovial manners, but sometimes evinced much feeling, especially when speaking of the emigrant ships. He wore three shirts – a clean one over two which were not perfectly clean – for he could not bear, he said, to show dirty linen. This happened only, however, he told me, when he was ‘out on the spree’, for then he was in the habit of buying a clean white shirt as soon as he wanted ‘a change’, and putting it on over his soiled one, in order to obviate the necessity of carrying his dirty linen about with him; so that by the stratification of his shirts he could always compute the duration of ‘the lark’. He wore only a jacket, and felt inconvenience, when on the spree, in having a dirty shirt to carry about; and to obviate this he adopted the plan I have mentioned:

‘I was boatswain of an emigrant ship last voyage. They were Government emigrants we had on board. The ship was 380 tons according to the new mode of measurement, and 500 tons according to the old mode. She had eight able men before the mast, four apprentices, a second mate, steward, cook, first mate, and captain. In addition to these, there were eight supernumeraries. You see, sir, all the Government emigrant and convict ships are obliged to take out four men and a boy to each 100 tons. We were near upon 400 tons burden; so we were obliged to have 16 able seamen and four boys; but, as I told you before, we had only eight able seamen. To make up the deficiency, we shipped eight supernumeraries. These supernumeraries were no sailors at all – not able to go aloft – couldn’t put their foot above the shearpole. They were mostly men that the Government had refused to assist to emigrate. The shipping master had put

them on blue jackets, and told them the names of ships to say they had served in, so as to get them a berth. The shipping masters will get them a register, ticket and all; and these are the men who are taken in preference to us, because they go upon nominal wages of a shilling a month. I tell you what it is, sir. I saw today half a dozen of these fellows taken instead of six good able-bodied seamen, who were left to walk the streets: that’s the candid fact, sir.

It’s a shameful thing to see the way we are treated. We are not treated like men at all; and what’s

more, there’s no dependence to be placed on us now. If a war was to break out with America, there’s thousands of us would go over to the other country. We’re worse than the black slaves; they are taken care of and we are not. On board ship they can do anything with us they think proper. If in case you are a spirited man, and speaks a word against an officer that tyrannicalises over you, he will put you in irons, and stop your money – six days for one: for every day you’re in irons he stops six days’ pay, and may be forfeits your whole wages. There’s as good men before the mast as there is abaft of it. It ain’t the same now as it used to be. Our fathers and mothers, you see, gives us all a little education, and we’re now able to see and feel the wrongs that are put upon us; and if in case people doesn’t do better for us than they do now, why, they’ll turn pirates.

The navy is just as much dissatisfied as the merchant seamen. If a war was to come with France, we might turn out against them – for we owe them a grudge for old times past. For myself, I can’t abear the hair of a Frenchman’s head. It would never do not to stand by the little

island again the Mounseers; but, again America, I'd never fire a shot! They have got feeling for a seaman there.

There's no people running after you there to rob you. The pay's a great deal better, too, and the food twice as good as in the English ships. There's no stint of anything; but in this country they do everything they can to rob a seaman. They're cutting our allowance of bread down from one pound to three-quarters, and our sugar is reduced from one pound to three-quarters as well; and they're trying to cut down our wages to 35s. a month besides. But what's it matter what they give us? They can trump up any charge they please against us, or they can tyrannicalize over us till a man's blood can't stand it, and then can stop as much as they like, and we can't say nothing against it.

I was out 13 months and a half. I went away last Christmas-eve twelvemonth, and I arrived in London the 8th of February last; and what do you think I got, sir, for the whole of my service – for risking my life, for working all hours, in all weathers – what do you think I got, sir. Why, I had £10 2s. – that's it sir – for 13 months and a half. I ought to have received about £32. My wages as boatswain were £2 10s. a month. I have had £4 and £3 10s. for the same duty. But the little petty owners is cutting down the wages as low as they can, till they're almost starving us and our families. The rest of the money that was due to me was stopped, because I spoke out for my rights; and five of the other hands had served in the same manner.

The owners saved near upon a hundred pounds in this way; and what's more they were not satisfied with this. The owners (I give you my word) stopped one pound

more out of the little that was coming to us, for a charitable institution as they called it. What it was I don't know.

The petty owners take every advantage in us they can. They can build their new ships – one or two every year – and they gets them all out of fleecing us. I tell you what it is – such men will be the ruin of the country, sir; for the tars that kept the little island in old times is now discontented to a man.

To reason why the owners stopped our pay was because we spoke out when the ship was short of hands. There was only four able men in her, and there should have been eight; so we had to do double work all of us, night and day. We complained to the captain that the ship was short-handed.

But, you see, the wages for able seamen is more in foreign countries than in England; so, to keep the ship's expenses down, the captains object to take on fresh hands in foreign ports. Well, the captain promised us to get some new men at Sydney, but he went to sea short-handed as we were.

So we axed him again to get fresh hands, as the ship was leaky, and we wanted our full complement of men; but he refused to do so, because the wages at the next port was nearly double the pay in London; and then we told him we wouldn't do any more work. This he called a mutiny, and our wages was stopped to near upon £20 a man. The usual rate of pay in an emigrant ship for an able seaman is £2 a month.

The tonnage varies from 200 to 1000. Ships of 200 are not safe to go as far as Sydney or New Zealand; but that the owners don't trouble their heads about, so long as they can get their ship full of emigrants. The greater number of

emigrant ships are about 500 tons. To understand how many emigrants can be comfortably accommodated in a ship, I should first tell you that in the best ships the emigrants are divided – that is, the single people are separated from the married; the single men are for’ard; the married people are midships, and the single women aft. In a vessel of such an arrangement not more than 60 emigrants to every 100 tons can be taken out with comfort. I have known near upon 100 emigrants taken out to each 100 tons – that is to say, I have known a ship of 380 tons have as many as 380 emigrants on board.’

A carpenter, who had made his two last voyages in emigrant ships, here said, ‘That is too often the case, I am sorry to say.’ A ship of 380 tons could take conveniently about 240 or 250 emigrants. The carpenter corroborated this, and told me that it is his duty to go down between decks each day, to open the scuttles and ports, so as to ventilate the ship, and he has frequently seen a man and his wife and three or four children all huddled up and almost stifled in a double berth (only a berth for two people). The death of some child has occurred almost every day in the ship.

In bad weather, when the hatches are kept on and tarpaulined over, often for two or three days at a time, the heat between the decks of an emigrant ship is as bad as the hold of a slave ship in the middle passage. The usual allowance in an emigrant ship of the best class is six foot by two foot. But ‘I have often seen,’ the carpenter said, ‘the poor people, in some of the worst ships, stowed away for’ard so close that you might have said they were ‘in bulk.’ There were 30 people in 30 feet space. I know, as a carpenter,

that many of the emigrant ships are not fit to bring home a cargo; though, as the owners say, they are quite fit to take emigrants out. I have seen right through the top sides (the timbers above the copper-sheating) of many of them – the planks have warped with the heat of the sun. A man has often to carry an emigrant ship in his arms, from one port to another, for the hands are always at the pumps. It may astonish the public that many emigrants are lost, but we ships carpenters are only astonished that there are so few.’

The boatswain here continued: ‘The carpenter has told you nothing but the truth. In the worst class ships there is scarcely any separation of the sexes. A partition is certainly run up between the sleeping berths; but as these do not reach the top, any one can make it convenient to get over, or look over, the partition into the next berth. There is scarcely a young single woman who emigrates that keeps her character on board o’ ship, and after that she mostly makes her appearance on the town in Sydney. I’m speaking of those who go out unprotected; and what else can be expected, sir, among a parcel of sailors? The captain and doctors often set the example, and the mates and the sailors, of course, imitate their superior officers. There has been no chaplain on board the emigrant ships that I have been in. Some captains read prayers once on a Sunday, but many don’t; and I have often known a ship go right away from London to Sydney, without divine service ever being performed.

The Government emigrants, I believe, usually pay about £7 per head, and those who are not sent out by the Government pay from £18 to £20 for the passage. For this sum they are found in provisions.



Emigration Vessel—between decks. Illustrated London News 1850, National Library of Australia

There is a certain scale of provisions allowed; but this is almost nominal, for the greater number of emigrant ships carry false weights, and the allowance served out is generally short, by at least a quarter.' (I could hardly credit that the spirit of commercial trickery had reached even the high seas, and that shipowners had taken to false weights as a means of enabling them to undersell their brother merchants. On inquiring, however, I was assured that the practice was becoming common.) 'Again, the quality of the food is of the worst kind. There are regular Government surveyors to overhaul the provisions of such ships; but, Lord love you! they are easily got to windward of. The captain, under the directions of the owners, puts some prime stuff among the top casks, and all the rest is old condemned stores – rotten beef and pork, that's positively green with putrefaction – and the biscuits are all weevilly; indeed they're so full of maggots, that the sailors say they're as rich as Welsh rabbits, when toasted. The poor things who emigrate have no

money to lay in their own private stock of food, and so they're wholly dependent on the ship's stores; and often they run so short that they're half-starved, and will come and beg a mouthful of the sailors. They're not allowed above one-third of what the sailors have. *We* have one pound and a half of meat, and they don't get above half a pound, and that's several ounces short from false weights. They have three quarts of water served out to them every day, and that very often of the filthiest description. It's frequently rotten and stinking; but, bad as it is, it's not enough for the poor people to cook with, and make their tea and coffee morning and evening. I have seen plenty of the emigrants hard put to with thirst – they would give anything for a drop to wet their lips with.

From all I have seen of the emigrant ships, I believe it's a system of robbery from beginning to end. There are gentlemen shipowners who treat their men and the passengers justly and fairly. These are mostly the owners of the largest ships; but of late years a class of petty

owners has sprung up – people who were clerks of the large owners a few years back – and they take every opportunity of tricking all in their pay. These men, I say again, will be the ruin of the country, unless something is done to protect the sailors against them. They're driving the tars out of the country as fast as they can. Convicts, when taken out, are very well treated; *the owners are obliged to take care of them*; there's a captain of marines to look after them, and it's quite wonderful how differently they fare to the poor emigrants. I never knew the convicts to be badly treated on board of ship, but I've known the emigrants to be so continually. You see the emigrants are poor people, and have no one to look after them.'

Edited by Dean Wharton from the original article reproduced at: <https://www.victorianlondon.org/mayhew/mayhew40.htm>

In Memorium

Tribute to My Grandfather, Sam Watson

By Sam Woripa Watson

Samuel William Watson, known to many as Uncle Sam, was born in the Royal Brisbane Hospital on the 17 November 1952, the second child of Eunice Watson, nee Coolwell, and Sam Watson.

Pop attended Mt Gravatt Primary and Mt Gravatt State High School, where he met the love of his life, my Nan, Catherine de Gunst, who he was with for the rest of his life.

Nan and Pop were married in 1971 by Pastor Don Brady, at a time when it was still illegal for a Black person to marry a White person without permission from the Chief Protector. Pop deliberately didn't seek permission.

Pop loved sport and was a gifted athlete. In school he played tennis, boxed and especially loved rugby league, supporting the Broncos and Maroons. Later in life he loved to play golf and would take his grandchildren out to the drive range with him. He was also familiar with 'putting a few bob on at the TAB.'



*Sam and Sam Woripa Watson
picture courtesy of Tony Robertson*

Pop had two children, Sam Wagan Watson and Nicole Watson, was second father to Robert and Bevan Canning, and Grandfather, 'Pop', to many grandchildren including Jesse, Harry, Corey, Paprika and myself. Pop had five siblings – two brothers and three sisters – many cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces, and lots of family that he loved deeply.

Some of my fondest memories of Pop are of listening to Black folk stories in bed early on weekend mornings and of massive family barbeques, and of his rousing speeches at protests and hearing the stories of the political journey he went on in his life.

Pop's Mum, Eunice, was involved with many organisations including One People of Australia League (OPAL), and as a child Pop would go to meetings with his parents. As a child in Brisbane

he also encountered soapbox speakers and this is where he was first exposed to militant trade unionism and working-class politics.

Pop's own involvement in politics started when he was still in high school. At only 16 years old he handed out how-to-vote cards for the 1967 referendum and also for his Aunt, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), who had campaigned for the referendum for many years and who ran in elections as a candidate for the Australian Communist Party, the only party at the time that was against the White Australia Policy, and as Nan puts it, 'really the only party that weren't racist.'

After high school, Pop went on to study law at the University of Queensland, one of the first Aboriginal people to do so. Pop was pulled into a meeting with the Director of Native Affairs and told not get involved with the troublemakers, the radicals, but it wasn't long before he found those radicals and joined campaigns on campus against the Vietnam War and apartheid in South Africa.

In 1972 Pop founded the Australian Black Panther Party with Denis Walker. At Pop's funeral, Gary Foley described the Black Panther Party as the most radical wing of the emerging Black Power Movement. Pop and Uncle Denis, with the Black Panthers, were part of some of the biggest moments of the Black Power Movement, including the original Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra in 1972.

Pop was instrumental in fighting for and founding many of the community organisations and services that exist today and played key roles in the



*Sam Watson speaking at Invasion Day Rally,
Meanjin (Brisbane) 2019
picture courtesy of Lachlan Hurse*

Aboriginal Legal Service, Murri Watch and most recently Link-Up (Qld).

Pop's novel *The Kadaitcha Sung* was published in 1990 and his film *Black Man Down* was released in 1995. He lectured at the University of Queensland, teaching two courses in Black Australian Literature.

While Pop navigated boardrooms, courtrooms and classrooms, he remained a radical. He was at the forefront of many rallies against Black deaths in custody; rallying and marching for justice in 1994, after the murder of Daniel Yock in the Brisbane watchhouse, in 2004 after the murder of Mulrunji Doomadgee in the Palm Island Watchhouse, and only weeks before Pop passed, he was at the rally in Brisbane demanding justice for Kumanjaya Walker, who was shot dead by police in his community of Yuendumu.

Pop was also always at the forefront of every Invasion Day. Invasion Day rallies and marches were sometimes only a few hundred people, but they grew over the

years and now hundreds of thousands rally around the nation every January 26th. He loved to see the size of the rallies grow each year. In recent years he'd call me up after the march and we'd guess how many people had shown up.

It was very rare that you would go to any rally for a good cause in Brisbane and not see Pop there. Whether it was on Labour Day, International Women's Day, for refugee rights, in support of Muslims and Palestinians, for climate justice, against racism, Pop was there.

Pop was a long-time socialist and knew it was crucial for all oppressed people – the racialised, the marginalised, the vilified, the poor and the working class – to unite. His embodiment of solidarity touched and inspired many people.

Pop passed away in the PA Hospital on the 27 November 2019. Auntie Nicole wrote that 'He was surrounded by loved ones, who held his hand as he made his final journey back to the Old People.'

Pop will be remembered as a proud Aboriginal man – cultural and spiritual – a storyteller, a warrior, a radical and a giant, someone who loved his family and his community and loved to get them together for a feed, and someone who knew a better world was possible and fought for it all his life.

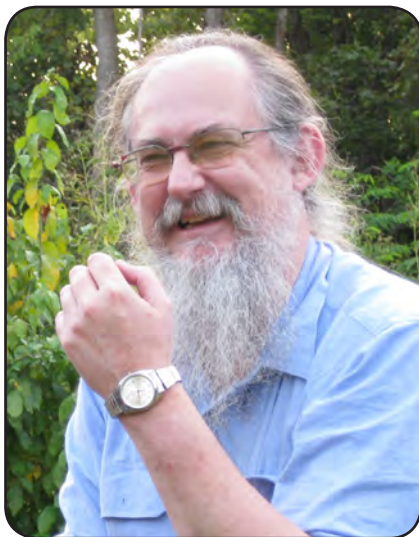
After the funeral Pop's last ride out of Musgrave Park and down Boundary Street was observed by the teary eyes and raised fists of those who loved him and what he stood for.

This year, the first Invasion Day since Pop's passing, was the biggest yet in Brisbane, with around 20,000 marching. I know Pop was there and that he would have been proud.

Sam Watson

Rhodes Hart 1952–2020

By Ross Gwyther



The history of the labour movement rests on two quite different pillars. On one hand there are very valid and useful reasons for focussing on the role of individuals in leading working-class struggles either as union officials or as prominent “rank and file” workers. On the other hand, there is a long tradition of focus on the grass roots history of the class as a whole – the “People’s Histories” of England or the United States come to mind.

Rhodes Hart, who passed away in February this year, was an important actor in that grass roots labour movement, while not perhaps playing a prominent or well-known part. The notice in the

Toowoomba Chronicle on 22nd February described him as “a scientist, scholar, community activist and friend to many” yet that does not really do justice to the contribution he has made to the broader people’s struggles to understand and to the world a better place.

Rhodes was born and grew up in the southside of Brisbane. Particularly gifted at maths and physics, his working life started as a physical chemistry researcher at Qld Uni. He then spent 25 years working in earthquake prediction studies at Qld University Physics Department and CSIRO. It was during this time that I met, and worked with him, in what was to become a lifetime friendship and comradeship. The last 15 years of his working life were spent as an astronomy researcher at Southern Cross University whilst he lived with his long time partner Ann Waite in Toowoomba.

Rhodes had a particular and unique ability to bring a scientific approach to analysing problems, together with both practical and theoretical ways of “making things work” – whether those things were earthquake monitoring instruments, gravity measurement equipment, or remotely controlled telescopes. He saw science as an enterprise that should be serving the people – not serving just the pursuits of individual scientists, and certainly not serving the interests of the big corporations which increasingly fund science research, but rather being carried out to make the lives of everyday people better and more fulfilling.

Through his whole working life Rhodes also had a deep and enduring sense of social justice, and a passion to take part in building a fairer and more just social world. In 1982 he joined in with a student club at UQ campaigning



Rhodes, Ross Gwyther and Jim Sharp at Australian Independence Movement stall 1998 (picture courtesy of Ross Gwyther)

for Aboriginal rights in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane that year. During the large support march through city streets – when hundreds of Bjelke’s police attempted to stop the march and arrest people – Rhodes made the decision to join those sitting in the street and getting arrested. That event was a significant turning point in his commitment to social and political action. It was also a source of some consternation for his Dad, who had never previously needed to bail Rhodes out of the watch-house! During a protracted battle by CSIRO staff during the 1990s to resist privatisation of computing services, he stood alongside his fellow unionists in what was to become a celebrated and successful campaign.

Over the past two decades Rhodes spent much time in the company of retired meatworker Jim Sharp (see obituary March 2018), who stayed in Rhodes’ house at Toowong. Along with three others—myself, Jen Kwok and Adrian Pollock—Rhodes edited a book of Jim’s poetry called *Leftside*. During that process he came to appreciate much of Jim’s working-class philosophy and experience and following Jim’s death

he became even more committed to contributing in whatever way he could to the labour movement.

Rhodes applied his science background, together with his characteristic insightful and meticulous approach, to understanding the Marxist labour theory of value. He did this not as an academic exercise but in order to make this explanation of the everyday exploitation of working people by capital accessible—and useable—by working class activists in their daily struggles to organise for a better life.

Humphrey McQueen worked closely with Rhodes on these investigations and summed up Rhodes' work as, “..distinguished through the quality of mind apparent behind how he frames his contributions. Far from posing rhetorical questions, he invites us to join him in delving deeper into why it was that our starting points are no longer taken as given in the unions: Jim's insistence that there can be no such thing as a fair day's pay'; or 'peace is union business. Rhodes never let go of that problem: how to make our commitment to social justice effective? He did more than his share of supporting individuals in need, emotionally and materially, but knew how terrible a power stood between good deeds and social equality”.

Ross Gwyther

Donal Burke Dwyer 1948–2020 A Great Labor Man

**By John Leahy and
Greg Mallory**



Don was born at Roma in South West Queensland and spent his early years on the family property outside Wallumbilla where his early formal education was supervised by his mother and father.

In 1959, Don became a boarder at St Joseph's Christian Brothers College at Indooroopilly and then at Nudgee Senior College where he enthusiastically participated in a range of sports. Don represented Nudgee in the GPS Sports competition in his great sporting loves of cricket and rugby. Later in life he had a forensic knowledge of games played and the outstanding players of

his Nudgee era. He was an assiduous student and a keen inter-school debater where his knowledge of political affairs stood out. Ultimately his results in his Senior exam led to him being offered a Commonwealth University Scholarship.

Don threw himself into the University life of the late 1960s and 1970s. He was an active member of the Australian Labor Party and as a member of Young Labor was involved in student politics, becoming Vice-President of the Labor Club. He served in the University of Queensland Regiment. Don played Rugby for Brothers, for the University Rugby League Club and later for Teachers-Norths where he played a few first-grade games in the early 1970s. Don enthusiastically participated in the party and pub life of Uni students of that era.

Don eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in journalism for which he was awarded a Journalism Prize. Don completed his degree part time after deferring studies for a number of years.

Don worked for the Brisbane City Council in the 1970s before taking a Senior Adviser role with the Opposition Leader in the Northern Territory. He then moved to Canberra where he worked as a public servant writing speeches, briefing notes, newsletters and press releases. Later he worked as a lobbyist, and for various Labor party politicians. Don's phenomenal memory enabled him to introduce new Members of Parliament to the history of the Labor Party. Many owe Don for their deeper understanding, not only of the ALP and its history, but also of the complexity of Australian politics over time. His role with the various members of Parliament with whom he worked lightened his life

and gave him great pleasure. He travelled extensively throughout the world. He loved living in Canberra, enjoying even the winters, and enthusiastically took part in its social and cultural life.

Don was an avid reader of books, newspapers and magazines, which continued to strengthen his phenomenal memory of people, places and events.

He loved his family and his friends. While he never married or had children, he was an important part in the lives of his siblings, their children and grandchildren and his many cousins and their families. He had many friends and maintained regular contact with them wherever they were in the world. Later in life he met a special person in Janice who cared for him to the day of his passing.

He loved politics, and the Australian Labor Party in particular, and served the party well in a variety of roles over many years. He was rewarded with Life Membership which he valued greatly. For many years Don was a valuable member of the Canberra branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and a member of Vintage Reds, the retired unionist network.

Don passed peacefully after dealing with cancer for about ten months.

John Leahy & Greg Mallory

Philip Richardson

By Greg Mallory



picture courtesy of Libby Richardson

Philip Richardson was a lecturer in politics at the University of Queensland during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Born in England, Philip was the only son of Bill Richardson, the editor of the British socialist journal *Reynold's News* which became *The Sunday Citizen* in 1962. Bill wrote histories of USDAW, the shopworkers union, and of the British Co-operative movement, and was knighted by the Labour Party Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Philip studied at Owen's School in London and graduated in Economics with a specialisation in

Government from the London School of Economics. He briefly studied at Pembroke College, Oxford University, before taking up residence at Nuffield College. As well as tutoring undergraduates he undertook work for the Workers Educational Association on International Affairs, and correspondence and weekend courses for the National Council of Labour Colleges. Philip joined the Communist Party whilst in England.

In 1961 he was appointed to the position of lecturer in political science at the University of Queensland. From 1967 he specialised in the teaching of Political Ideologies and Movements of the late 19th and 20th centuries. In 1968 he was voted the best lecturer at the University in a student poll.

He was very active supporter of the radical student movement. He spoke at the University of Queensland Forum many times and he was a member, or fellow traveller, of the Students for Democratic Action. During the 1960s he had enormous influence over future student leaders such as Mitch Thompson and Brian Laver. Dan O'Neil recalls that after Brian split from the New Student Movement ticket for the 1967 Student Union elections, Philip helped Brian write the program for his independent bid for Union President.

In 1970 Philip lectured me in Modern Political Ideologies. In these lectures he brought me to understand the various ideologies

such as conservatism, liberalism, socialism and of course Marxism and anarchism. During this period, he was an advocate of anarchism, selling the British journal *Anarchy* around the campus. He also distributed a paper called *Peace News*. Philip was popular socially and he often spent alternate weekends with the Sydney Push, a libertarian group that met in different pubs around Sydney and had members that ranged from wharfies to university lecturers. Two of its more well-known members were Germaine Greer and Clive James.

In the words of one of his former students, Hugh Childers, 'he was an outstanding lecturer, combining the sort of wit and wisdom with a deep knowledge that I expected of all academics but rarely found. But perhaps I was aiming too high'. During his lectures he spoke about sport and other interests while puffing on a cigarette.

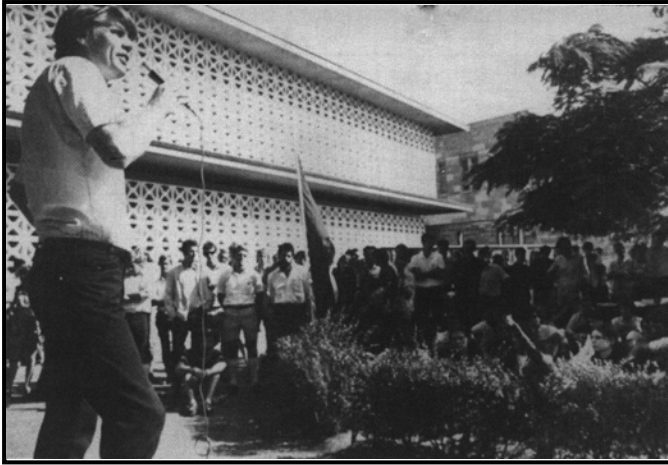
Carlene Crowe has written;

What many people will remember about Philip was his wonderfully entertaining political science lectures. He was the only lecturer who ad-libbed his way through an hour's lecture without any notes. Sometimes he didn't seem to remember what the topic that day was, or pretended not to, so students would call out: 'You're meant to be lecturing on Churchill's war cabinet' or 'Anthony Eden and Suez'

...and after a long draw on a fag, off he'd go, and it was if it was the first time he'd spoken publicly on his favourite subject. His lecture hall was always a full house. He was quite a showman in his modest way, and a gifted orator.

Whilst in Brisbane he took part in events organised by trade unions and political parties that needed speakers. He also directed weekend schools on current affair topics for the University of New England's Lismore branch. He gave radio talks for the ABC and from 1970 became a TV commentator on current affairs on the ABC's 'This Day Tonight' and later for its counterpart 'Today' on Channel 9. He met his future wife Elizabeth (Libby) at UQ.

In 1974 he returned to England and read for the bar. By 1977 he commenced practice on his own account and in 1979 he took up a position as a community lawyer with the Handsworth Law Centre in Birmingham, England. The emphasis was on housing, immigration, juvenile crime and consumer problems. His community activity included co-ordinator of the large and active Tenants and Residents Association of the Ladywood Council Estate. He left Handsworth before the major, and heavily politicised, riots there in 1981.



Phil Richardson speaking at the UQU Forum, Semper Floreat Vol 44 No 16 1974.

He then switched to teaching Politics and Economics at Maidstone Grammar School. In all his endeavours, Libby tells us, he exhibited the same dynamism and irreverence for bureaucracy as he did when he lectured at UQ.

I lost touch with Philip over the years although I recently heard that he sometimes visited Brisbane. One of the last times I saw him was when I invited him to visit me in Wigan, Lancashire, England where I was working in the

mid-1980s. Although he was an expert on George Orwell, referring to him in the title of an article as 'A Hero of our Times,' he had never visited Wigan. Reflecting his Southern English upbringing he was astounded by the fact that the locals still wore cloth caps as they had in Orwell's day.

Philip died in April from Covid-19.

Greg Mallory

Additional research by **Dean Wharton**

Contributors

Andrew G. Bonnell is an Associate Professor of History, University of Queensland. His publications include *The People's Stage in Imperial Germany. Social Democracy and Culture, 1890–1914* (2005), *Shylock in Germany: Antisemitism and the German Theatre from the Enlightenment to the Nazis* (2008) and a forthcoming book on the mental world of German Social Democrats in Imperial Germany. He is also a long-standing elected official in the National Tertiary Education Union.

Cameron Costello is a Quandamooka man from Moreton Bay off the coast of Brisbane in South East Queensland. A law graduate from the University of Queensland he also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Leisure Management. Cameron has over 15 years' experience in local and state governments delivering First Nation policies and programs including the Backing Indigenous Arts Program and the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. Cameron is currently the CEO for the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) - the Native Title Body and Cultural Heritage Body for the native title determination over Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island).

Phil Griffiths teaches Political Economy at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba. He has published a number of articles on the ruling class agendas behind the development of the White Australia policy, including in *Labour History*. He was the co-convenor of the 2017 ASSLH Labour History Conference.

Howard Guille worked and taught in Europe and New Zealand before coming to Australia in the mid-1970s. He was the foundation appointment in industrial relations at what became Brisbane CAE. He worked at the Trades and Labour Council of Queensland from 1988 to 1992. He was involved in major projects in award restructuring, industrial policy and in trying to combat corporatisation, privatisation and national competition policy. Howard was the Queensland Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union from 1994 to 2006. This became increasingly complex with enterprise bargaining and the assault of the Coalition Government on the NTEU. He was a member of the TLC Executive from 1996 to 2006. He served as the QCU representative on the Queensland Heritage Council 2007–2012. In 2000, 2008 and 2013 Howard assisted the Papua New Guinea Trade Union Congress with research and submissions to the National Minimum Wage Boards of those years. He retired from the paid workforce in 2008 after two years as Associate Professor in Humanities at Queensland University of Technology. He has undertaken research and written on a wide range of topics including industrial relations theory and policy, labour market policy, globalisation, industry, housing and social policy.

Ross Gwyther was an organiser with the NTEU for ten years, after an earlier career as a research geophysicist, and some years working in factories and on the Queensland railways. He is a member of the Brisbane Labour History Association Executive and a former editor of *The Queensland Journal of Labour History*. He is co-convenor of Just Peace Queensland, and a national committee member of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN).

John Leahy is a lifelong resident of Brisbane with an interest in Australian history and politics.

Greg Mallory is vice-president of the BLHA after spending 17 years as President. He has been awarded Life Membership of the BLHA. Greg has published three books *Uncharted Waters: Social Responsibility in Australian Trade Unions*, *The Coalminers of Queensland*, Vol 2 *The Pete Thomas Essays*, *Voices from Brisbane rugby league*, *Oral Histories from the 50s to the 70s*.

John Martin is the Research and Policy Officer at the Queensland Council of Unions and has been in this position since 2012. John has previously held positions within the union movement, government (including as Industrial Relations Advisor to the Northern Territory Government), and the private sector. John has a PhD from Griffith University and is a sessional academic at the University of Queensland. John has previously been the President of the Industrial Relations Society of Queensland and has delivered papers at several national and international conferences. John's research interests are industrial relations and workplace health and safety.

Henry Mayhew (1812–1887) was a journalist who co-founded *Punch* magazine in 1841. He published a series of newspaper articles in *The Morning Chronicle* that was later compiled into a book series, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). His work is believed to have strongly influenced that of Charles Dickens.

Jeff Rickertt is a longstanding member of the BLHA and has served on its management committee and as an editor of this journal. He is a librarian, an archivist and a labour historian with research interests in the history of working class movements and socialist politics in Queensland. He contributed articles and editorial assistance to the book *Radical Brisbane: An Unruly History*. His publications also include *Resistance on the Line: A History of Australian Telephonists and their Trade Unions, 1880–1988*, and *The Conscientious Communist: Ernie Lane and the Rise of Australian Socialism*. He is currently writing a history of Queensland's meatworkers. Jeff's work as a labour historian draws insight and inspiration from his own experiences as an activist in the trade union movement. He is a delegate and branch committee member for the National Tertiary Education Union.

Samuel Woripa Watson is a Wangerriburrah and Birri Gubba person. Based in Meanjin (Brisbane), Watson is an Aboriginal activist and socialist.

Dean Wharton is a former elected branch secretary of the UK trade unions The Society of Radiographers and UNISON. He has been a radiation therapist for more than 25 years. He is currently on leave from his research at the University of Queensland on the role of Alex Macdonald on Queensland industrial relations in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead he is home-schooling his two primary school aged kids whilst they are in isolation; an enforced career change which has re-affirmed his long-held recognition that all teachers are grossly underpaid.



Brisbane
Labour
History
Association



THE FATAL LURE OF
POLITICS
The Life and Thought of
Vere Gordon Childe
TERRY IRVING

The Fatal Lure of Politics

The Life and Thought of
Vere Gordon Childe
Terry Irving

**Brisbane book launch to be organised
by the Brisbane Labour History
Association Winter/Spring 2020**

RENOWNED Australian-born archaeologist and prehistorian Vere Gordon Childe (1892–1957) had a lifelong fascination with socialist politics. In his early life he was active in the Australian labour movement and wrote *How Labour Governs* (1923), the world's first study of parliamentary socialism. However, he decided to pursue a life of scholarship to 'escape the fatal lure' of politics and Australian labour's 'politicalism' – his term for its misguided emphasis on parliamentary representation.

In Britain, with the publication of *The Dawn of European Civilisation* (1925), Childe began a career that would establish him as preeminent in his field and one of the most distinguished scholars of the mid-twentieth century. At the same time, he aimed to 'democratise archaeology' and involve people in its practice. *What Happened in History* (1942), his most popular book, sold 300,000 copies in its first 15 years.

Politics continued to lure Childe, and for forty years he was spied upon by security services of Britain and Australia. He supported Russia's 'grand and hopeful experiment' and opposed the rise of fascism. His Australian background reinforced his hatred of colonialism and imperialism. Politics was also implicated in his death. There is a direct line between Childe's early radicalism and his final – and fatal – political act in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

The Fatal Lure of Politics is a new and radically different biography about the central place of socialist politics in Childe's life, and his contribution to the theory of history that this politics entailed.

'Deeply researched and eloquently written'

— Phillip Deery

*'Extraordinary, investigative scholarship – biography at its
very best'*

— Verity Burgmann

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The Brisbane Labour History Association

The Brisbane Labour History Association encourages and promotes the study, teaching, research and publication of labour history and the preservation of labour archives. There are no limits to the study of labour history and the diverse membership reflects many different areas of concern.

The BLHA is the Brisbane branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. The Association organises seminars, lectures, meetings, conferences and publications on themes of labour history. Membership is open to all individuals and organisations who subscribe to the Association's objectives.

Editorial Policy

The Queensland Journal of Labour History is a journal of labour and social history with an emphasis on Queensland history. The history of labour, the classic social movement, is central to our concerns, as are the histories of newer social movements. This journal is committed to the view that history has a social purpose. It publishes articles which, in Ian Turner's words, engage our sympathies, affect present circumstances and suggests answers to present problems. In the words of the Association's slogan, 'The Past is Always with Us'. Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the Association or the Editors. The Journal's Editorial Board is a committee of the BLHA.

Notes for Contributors

The journal is published in Spring and Autumn each year. Articles of any length are invited.

First person accounts of trade union, social movement and progressive political struggles and organisations are particularly welcome. Reports on exhibitions, seminars and research projects are sought, as are book reviews and photo essays.

Contributions can be submitted either as hard copy (posted to The Secretary) or as an electronic file, emailed to qldlabhist@gmail.com. Please use Styles rather than character formatting of your article as it interferes with the layout of the journal. Please ensure that your name, any relevant organisational affiliation, and all contact details are included in the article itself, as well as in the covering email.

Please also send details of any graphics, photographs, maps, drawings, cartoons etc that might accompany your article.

The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

No. 30, Autumn/Winter 2020
ISSN 1832-9926

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Australian Society for the Study of Labour History