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Results of Oz Union (MUA) ROV campaign 2008

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Post subject: **Results of Oz Union (MUA) ROV campaign 2008**

Below is an extract from the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) on the outstanding success of their ROV campaign, over the 2007-2008, period to get an offshore industry ROV agreement in place.

From 2009 ROV in Australia are covered by a comprehensive employment agreement.

You will note (in light of recent discussions on here) that **Subsea 7 in Oz signed the agreement**, but only after putting up a fight along with a bunch of other employers. No surprise there.

As I have said all along, The UK divers can do it, The Norwegians can do it, The Oz divers did it and now the OZ ROV people have done it.... so can the UK ROV sector!

No matter how big these companies are, or how powerful they *think* they may be, they all fall in the end when it comes to collective bargaining.

Sit down for a few minutes with a brew and read this.....
Afterwards mentally replace the words *MUA* with *OILC-RMT* and *Australia* with *UK* and see how probable it looks.

Apologies for the formatting.....

2009 MUA Campaign for
Seafarers and ROV Workers

February 2009

With 2009 now upon us it is important that we review the year just gone so we can take stock of what it is we have achieved in 2008. Because contrary to previous history in this industry and against the campaign run by AMMA and the ROV employers, and for the first time, we have seen a seismic shift in how ROV workers are viewed by the offshore industry. And that is clearly reflected in the movement in rates and conditions that we saw in 2008. In particular, the massive shift in day rates across the bulk of the ROV

industry.

However, some ROV workers have reported back to the MUA that a few workers new to the industry mistakenly believe that the increase in rates was due to the goodwill of industry and AMMA. Those who have been around the industry know the history of rates and conditions for ROV workers and full well appreciate what the MUA campaign has done.

For those who are newer to the industry and for those who have some misguided sense of where the current rates and conditions have come from it is worth going through the key aspects of last year's campaign.

In the second half of 2007 a group of ROV workers came to the MUA, for the second time, to see if we would have another go at trying to organize the ROV industry. This was because of the state of the rates and conditions and in particular the manner in which ROV workers had fallen further behind the rest of the offshore industry. It was clear that if one part of the industry was missing out on what everyone else in the offshore industry took for granted in terms of wages and conditions then there was a distinct lack of respect for the skills and knowledge that ROV workers brought to the lucrative offshore industry. ROV workers are the hands and eyes of the entire industry and they were not being compensated for what they contributed. Aside from the sheer unfairness of the situation, from the MUA's perspective we could not allow one sector of the industry to remain unorganized because of the pressure that puts on the rates and conditions for the rest of the industry. We had to act and so at the end of 2007 we began the ROV campaign in earnest.

For us to run our campaign and for the employers and AMMA to sit up and take notice we had to get union membership in the industry up. All the long termers had strong memories of the last campaign to improve ROV rates and conditions run by the AMOU.

As ROV workers began joining the MUA in significant numbers AMMA promised and offered a significant increase in rates and conditions to keep the MUA out. When the MUA handed back its growing membership to the AMOU and stepped back from the campaign AMMA then arrogantly cut in half the promised offer of increased rates and conditions. With this arrogant move by AMMA fresh in everyone's mind we knew we had to campaign hard and smart and make sure that everyone in the ROV industry knew the MUA was here to stay.

We set about building the membership and once we got 80% of the industry on board we approached the employers to request that they sit and negotiate new and fair terms and conditions of employment for ROV workers across the entire offshore industry. That was in March of last year and we wrote to every ROV employer with the hope of industry negotiations.

Campaigning to ensure ROV workers are recognised and rewarded for the contribution they make to the oil and gas industry!!!

Most of you will remember that every ROV employer wrote back to the MUA with exactly the same response that had been written out for them by AMMA.

That response has been lifted from the emails back in March last year and reads as follows:

Quote:

" Thank you for your email invitation to discuss terms and conditions of employment for ROV personnel engaged by XXXXXXXX.

For some years now our Company has used direct employment arrangements with our ROV personnel and this has proven to be an effective and mutually beneficial arrangement for both the Company and its employees. We have always enjoyed an excellent relationship with our employees by amongst other things offering a competitive wage and conditions package.

Our agreements with our employees remain current at this time so we are not in a position to negotiate new agreements.

We therefore decline your invitation for discussions.

Thank you for your interest in our employees and the Company."

Every ROV employer; exactly the same answer, all within a week or so of each other.

Clearly the ROV industry, on behalf of AMMA, had indicated that as far as they were concerned the rates and conditions for ROV workers were fine. There would only be one more 5% increase for 2008 in July as per the AMMA Scheduled ROV rates. Remember that this was during March and April of last year.

So we changed tack and began to go after the ROV companies one at a time. Subsea 7 was first cab off the rank followed by the other major ROV employers. And one by one they fell when the MUA campaign, with your full support, swung into effect. A key part of that strategy was the majority of you guys filling out and signing the Bargaining Agent forms nominating the MUA as your Bargaining Agent.

We submitted those to the Government authority and then instituted legally binding bargaining periods under the Federal Act as well as legally required meetings, strategically using Howards old laws to get an outcome. The results were mixed because some ROV workers voted for immediate increases whilst others voted no to initial offers only to see them improved again. But one thing is clear. Through a smart, hard and strategic campaign by the MUA rates and conditions for ROV workers in the offshore industry were lifted by between 20% and 35% in the first year and up to nearly 50% over three years. The 5% rate increase that the ROV employers and AMMA told us in writing we were getting was dramatically increased over a campaign that ran 6 months. 90% of the ROV industry had their rates and conditions increased significantly as employer after employer responded to our campaign.

A good campaign and across the board support from the MUA ROV membership resulted in the biggest single change to this industry ever.

We still have some way to go with the need to make sure that this year's increases come through. We also need to examine closely what comes out of the other major offshore EBA's this year so that we insert that into the next lot of agreements due up the year after next. The important EBA's coming up this year are, in the first instance, the offshore marine crew EBA's with the MUA once again leading the charge in that campaign.

This is followed by the metalworker's offshore EBA and then in the second half of the year we have the MUA diver's EBA. All this should give us a clear understanding of where the industry is heading and where we expect to take our next ROV campaign.

What is also clear is that we can't let the ROV industry go back to where it was. That is unorganized with terms and conditions being at the whim of the employers and AMMA. We let that happen in this industry for too long and we have come too far in the last year to go back there. And the only thing standing between going forward and going backwards is the level of union membership in the industry. Every one of us has an obligation to make sure that every ROV worker is a union member. We have come too far to let it slip.

For those who haven't yet joined your union membership is your investment in the future wages and conditions in your industry.

Talk to some of the ROV guys who have been around a bit and get an understanding of what the industry was like without the MUA and our campaign. And that was just over 15 months ago.

Get financial, join your union and take a stake in your industry for both your future and that of your family. Many of you insure your house and car. Insure your job and your industry that pays for the way you and your family live. With increases in rates alone last year of between \$500 and \$2000 per week the dues you pay each year for your MUA membership is a strong conscious decision to secure your industry. ROV workers are taking back ownership of their industry.

Below is a copy of an email the MUA received at the end of last year in relation to the 2008 MUA campaign. It sums up well the impact we all had in taking this industry closer to where it should be.

Quote:

Hi Will,

Just got an SMS about a rally on the 2nd Dec. Unfortunately I am on a job in Malaysia at the moment so I won't be able to make it. Can you tell me what it is all about?

Also I would like to report that your good work is making a difference in the

Asian ROV market as well. The rates are rising to a point where we almost get the same as in Oz. It is not just the exchange rate either. The reports I am getting are that the conditions are getting so much better in Oz that overseas companies are having a hard time keeping Australian guys on their books and having to better their conditions and Pay to keep us.

Keep up the good work and I am sorry about not being able to make the rally.

Cheers,

Myths

On the last page of this flyer are some common myths about Unions that regularly do the rounds as people try to make sense of what is the biggest representative body of any group of people in Australia. As you read these remember that many, many people from all walks of life belong to Unions. In fact, even most high profile sportsmen and women in Australia belong to their own sporting Unions.

We see time and again agreement negotiations by the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) who represent Australia's cricketers. These disputes usually result from Cricket Australia trying to get the high profile players onto a flat rate rather than their current 25% share of all takings. ACA, the cricketers Union, is also charged with deciding whether a country, such as Pakistan, is safe for Australian players to tour. The Australian cricketers union is ably led by Darren Lehman with other committee members being Damian Fleming, Matthew Hayden, Ian Healy, Michael Hussy and Simon Katich. Every single player with the Australian cricket team is in their Union as are the top Australian Rugby Union players, Rugby League players and Soccer players.

The AFL Players Association has 100% membership of all AFL players and it is generally the top players in each club who hold the delegate's role. Examples include Matthew Pavlich for the Dockers, Adam Selwood for the Eagles, Tarkyn Lockyer for Collingwood, Jarrod Crouch for Sydney, Jonathon Brown for Brisbane, Jimmy Bartel for Geelong and Brad Sewell for the Hawthorn. The Executive is made up of Brendan Gale, Joel Bowden, Luke Power, Brett Burton, Tom Harley, Robert Murphy, Nick Maxwell, Luke Ball, Adam Goodes, Ashley Hanson and past player Simon Madden. A formidable list of Union officials if ever there was one. The AFL Players Association is recognised as having become a strong Union and advocate for players rights during the well guided leadership of ex-Carlton great Justin Madden.

As we watch another great summer of sport and then progress into the winter sports of AFL and both codes of Rugby remember that all these guys are financial Union members.

They know the benefits of having a strong representative Union to give them

confidence that their own long term interests in their own industry will always come first. Common Union

- MYTH 1

“Unions are just stirrers”

Australians have always believed in a fair go for people. We believe everyone is entitled to their say. Unfortunately, the media, bosses and politicians don't listen to just one worker talking. Unions bring together members' feelings on issues and put them forward strongly. Union officials can argue with employers on behalf of workers. Individual workers can face intimidation, reprisals or even the sack for raising an issue. Some people think things would be quieter without unions. But if you haven't got a voice, then no-one will hear you.

- MYTH 2

“Unions go on strike too often’

This is a favourite myth of the media, employers and conservative politicians. In fact, fewer working days are lost through strikes now than at any time since the late 60's. Far more days are lost through industrial injuries and accidents than strikes. Unions don't go on strike for the fun of it – members must feel an issue is important enough to stop work and lose wages over. Stopping work is often the only way to get employers to listen after the union has exhausted all other avenues. Unions have a responsibility to their members' wages and conditions first and foremost.

- MYTH 3

“Unions are too powerful”

That's what employers and the conservatives always say – and it's just not true. Employers have control over investment, prices, employment levels and the economy. Unions are needed to balance this. They raise issues such as cuts to living standards: rises in unemployment while profits and prices continue to burgeon over wages. Despite this, strikes are at an all time low.

- MYTH 4

“I'll get the benefits anyway”

That's a common attitude among non-unionists who let union members carry the standards of wages and conditions. It goes against the Australian tradition of sticking together and giving each other a hand. It's also still because in the long run, if everyone thought that way, then ultimately the jobs would go to those who offered to do them for the least pay.

- MYTH 5

“I don't need a union – I can talk to my boss”

While you may be able to approach your employer face-to-face, it's

only fair to point out that most employers belong to 'unions' of their own. Employers' federations (ie. AMMA), chambers of commerce and manufacturers exist for the same reason trade unions do – to protect their members' interests. As a result, many employers are able to use the resources and facilities provided by their representative.

That's an awful lot to face by yourself. That's why you need your own expert – the union.

- MYTH 6

“Unions were important once”

Some people can't see the need for unions today because they take for granted the conditions under which they work. We've inherited fairer wages, regulated working hours, lunch and tea breaks, paid holidays and sick leave, overtime allowances, protection from unfair dismissal, assistance with legal advice, maternity and bereavement leave, more job security, protection from unhealthy and unsafe work practices. And they're all conditions won the hard way by generations of working people. If unions weren't there, how long do you think these conditions would last?