

**ITEM 17 LMM 25/08/20 - BUILD THEM HERE – SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

Part A

1. Notes with disappointment that Sydney's new ferries, which were built in Indonesia, have been found to contain asbestos while docked at Carrington awaiting testing in Newcastle Harbour;
2. Reiterates that in 2016, the NSW Government gave a commitment in the NSW Parliament that it "will use its best endeavours" to source local content on transport infrastructure projects and that City of Newcastle passed a unanimous motion calling on the NSW Government to abandon its plans to offshore local manufacturing jobs;
3. Notes that since this commitment, the NSW Government has offshored the manufacturing of Newcastle Light Rail rolling stock, the NSW Intercity Fleet of trains that services the Newcastle to Sydney service and Sydney's ferries;
4. Calls on the NSW Government to commit to building the state's vital transport infrastructure in NSW, to avoid disastrous consequences such as billion dollar blow outs on trains that don't fit through tunnels on the intercity line and ferries that contain asbestos and are too tall for their planned routes.

Part B

1. Congratulates Novocastrian Cory Wright on his election as State Secretary of the NSW Branch of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), and ex-Novocastrian Steve Murphy on his recent election as the Federal Secretary of the AMWU, noting that both officials began their union careers organising manufacturing workers in Newcastle and the Hunter Region;
2. Notes that Newcastle and the Hunter's manufacturing industries strongly contribute to the regions diverse economy with particular strengths across advanced manufacturing, aerospace, defence, and mining contributing more than \$34 billion to the NSW economy;
3. Notes that supporting a strong manufacturing sector will be a key component to Newcastle and the Hunter Region's recovery from the COVID-19 global pandemic, as well as the transition to a net-zero carbon economy.
4. Notes that any plans for economic recovery and energy transition are most likely to be successful when workers are part of the decision making and are supported in the transition.
5. Writes to both the NSW and Federal Secretaries of the AMWU, seeking their input into protecting and strengthening manufacturing and supporting manufacturing workers in Newcastle, both through the COVID recovery and transition to net-zero carbon economy.

BACKGROUND:

Government defends new Sydney ferries despite height issue

Sydney Morning Herald | Tom Rabe | 24 August 2020

NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance doesn't believe there is a problem with 10 new Sydney ferries despite warning commuters they would "need to duck" under two bridges if seated on their top decks.

The Sydney Morning Herald revealed on Monday that new River Class ferries cannot travel under two bridges on the Parramatta River if commuters are seated on their top decks.

Ferry staff will need to call people off the top deck before the vessel passes under the Gasworks and Camellia bridges, Transport for NSW confirmed.

Asked why commuters would be called off the top deck, Mr Constance said: "Because otherwise they'd need to duck.

And it's near Duck Creek," he continued, joking.

The opposition and maritime union have criticised the government for allowing private operator Transdev to order the vessels off the shelf.

"The most obvious name for these new ferries is 'The Duck'. At least it'll be a warning for overseas passengers if they jump on a ferry at Parramatta," Labor's transport spokesman Chris Minns said.

"The 'one size fits all' infrastructure program of foreign firms is not working for Sydney's complicated transport network."

Mr Constance said some charter boats were already dealing with the issue, and it shouldn't be a problem for the new ferries.

"Other than me putting in drawbridges and changing the tides, we want people to experience, east of those two bridges ... the ability to sit outside and enjoy beautiful days like today," Mr Constance said on Monday.

But the RiverCat ferries, which have been running commuters up and down the Parramatta River since the 1990s, do not have seating or passenger platforms on the roof.

Mr Constance said the decision to buy the Indonesian-made ferries was made by Transdev, and conceded he would have preferred to see the vessels built in Australia.

"This is the decision that has been made with the budget that we've got," he said. "That was a decision of Transdev. Absolutely, I would have preferred to have seen that Hobart builder or Port Macquarie ... but they had to make it work and they obviously made that decision."

Maritime Union of Australia national safety and training officer Jake Field said maritime workers had enough to contend with while crewing the vessels without herding commuters off the top deck before the ferry approached two bridges.

"We can't be up there making sure that they're all ducking in time and they don't get their heads taken off by the Gasworks Bridge."

Mr Field also criticised the government for allowing three of the ferries into Australia with asbestos in them.

A Transdev spokeswoman confirmed "traces" of asbestos had been found in the boats in a gasket on board. She said a licensed asbestos removal contractor had now removed the contaminated material.

The new vessels have capacity for 200 people, including 122 indoor seats, 18 outdoor seats on the lower deck, and 10 seats on the upper deck.

The ferries will be added to circulation with the existing RiverCats, which seat 230. They will replace the SuperCats, HarbourCats and four charter vessels that are supplementing regular services.

A New Approach to Energy Politics

Cory Wright | 17 August 2020

We've seen it time and time again, politicians smiling with workers in Hi Viz every time they want to add a spice of authenticity to their campaign.

Conservative politicians have used this tactic to their advantage to extend the political viability of coal and fossil fuels and turn workers against each other.

And it's worked.

We know it's worked because we see little interrogation of their motives they must be fighting so hard for coal subsidies because they care about workers, not because they are in the pockets of big mining bosses.

Why we know it's worked even more so, is because some in our own party have swallowed the rhetoric whole.

We've seen politician after politician championing fossil fuels, and demonising environmental activists, not because it's in the best interests of their communities, but because they see it as the shortest path to re-election.

I've been organising blue collar workers in the Hunter Valley for the best part of 12 years.

It's true that many blue-collar workers have made a great life of their work in power stations, coal mines and downstream industries.

But none of them suffer under the illusion that this is because of the goodwill of big corporations.

These jobs are well-paid because unions and community fought hard to make them so.

In Newcastle, we know all too well what trail of destruction big corporations can leave behind.

From 2012 to 2014, I spent almost all my time supporting workers' and their families through job losses as the mining boom wound down.

As a union leader, this is not something I am prepared to allow to happen again.

The idea that the future of these industries should be left to the free market, void of genuine community dialogue and a seat at the table for workers is setting us on a path back to 2012, where workers' were left high and dry, and whole towns were all but decimated.

Every time politicians use their platform to criticise environmental activists or champion coal, is another moment they are failing to engage with their community to plan for an inevitable crash.

Punching down on an easy target might feel good for a moment, but it won't fix the problem.

The inheritance of this climate change culture war by ALP figures also patronises our members that work in these industries.

It sends a message that they don't believe workers in these industries are capable of contributing to these discussions in a meaningful way, that workers who use their hands to make a living are insignificant in the debate.

Politicians tie themselves in knots trying to articulate how blue-collar workers see the world. It's pretty simple.

Our members are proud of what they do, the skills they have and what they produce. They have a sense of pride and crave a sense of security, one that most recognise will not exist for much longer without change.

After the last Federal election, I set aside some time to talk to our members in the power stations about climate change and the future of fossil fuels.

While we didn't all agree on everything, there was one thing that was resoundingly obvious to us. This issue is our business and we need a seat at the table on the future of our jobs and livelihoods.

Our members have said again and again that they expect us to have a seat at the table.

Not because they want us to posture or waste our time in a culture war, but because through every structural change its been unions and community alone who have looked out for workers. It's unions that will fight for their security.

Our union has thought long and hard about how we might intervene effectively in this issue.

We have taken the unlikely step of building a coalition with other trade unions, community and environmental groups to start the long process of advocating for industry and regional investment.

We've done this because division and derision has not delivered a fix to this issue in over a decade.

We've also done this because we're not afraid of having tough conversations and finding common ground with people who we may not ordinarily side with.

That is what issues as big as this call for.

Egos and self-interests in the bin, and everyone rolling up their sleeves and finding a way through.

Cory Wright is the newly elected state secretary for the AMWU NSW branch. He has been organising manufacturing workers in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley for 12 years.

RELATED PREVIOUS DECISIONS:

- CCL 28/06/16 – BUILD THEM HERE