



Bendigo Advertiser
11-Mar-2010
Page: 1
General News
Region: Bendigo VIC
Circulation: 14582
Type: Regional
Size: 684.48 sq.cms
Frequency: MTWTFS-

THE HUGE \$1500 IGA GROCERY GIVEAWAY TOKEN INSIDE

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The Advertiser

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Thursday March 11 2010

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THE Transport Workers Union has launched a campaign to highlight the tragic death of 287 truck drivers on roads across Australia during 2009. TWU area organiser Daryl Coghill was in Bendigo yesterday for the launch.

FULL REPORT P6

Picture: BILL CONROY



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11-Mar-2010
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By: Nino Bucci
Region: Bendigo VIC
Circulation: 14582
Type: Regional
Size: 166.38 sq.cms
Frequency: MTWTFS-

Truckies battling on safety

TRANSPORT Workers Union officials are taking to the streets to let the community know the importance of improved conditions in their industry.

TWU Victoria-Tasmania Branch secretary Wayne Mader said 287 transport workers died in Australia last year.

Crosses bearing the number 287 were yesterday erected at the pedestrian crossing near the intersection of Tomlins and McCrae streets.

“There is a link between safety and rates of pay,” Mr Mader said.

“If people don’t get paid correctly, they tend to make it up and cut corners.

“They’ll drive further and they’ll drive longer.

“That makes it more dangerous for everyone who uses the road.”

A report by Safe Work Australia issued late last year found road freight industry workers were more than 13 times more likely to be killed at work than the average employee.

By NINO BUCCI

Mr Mader said the union was pushing for deaths in the industry to be treated as workplace accidents.

They are currently treated as road fatalities.

He said this would give workplace authorities the power to ensure workers were not subjected to unsafe conditions.

TWU Victoria-Tasmania Branch northern organiser Daryl Coghill said there were about 500 transport workers in central Victoria.

Mr Coghill, who has been driving trucks in the region for about 25

years, said many drivers were forced to travel long distances with no time for rest.

He said some drivers were given a 10-hour deadline to travel from Bendigo to Sydney — about 860km.

“One of the most dangerous things we face is the time frames we’re put under from get to A to B.

“Most of the time it’s right on the limit, not allowing for any breakdowns or stops.”

“There is a link between safety and rates of pay”



Road freight safety is not negotiable

TRUCK driver fatalities totalling 287 is 287 too many — for any industry.

As the Transport Workers Union has pointed out, if this happened in any other field of business there would be a national outcry.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the TWU campaign unveiled in Bendigo yesterday is the belief that there is a distinct link between rates of pay and safety.

Drivers who are pushed too hard or who feel under too much pressure to arrive at their destination more rapidly are at far greater risk of being involved in an accident — putting their own safety and that of other road users at increased risk.

One shocking statistic revealed by Safe Work Australia shows that road freight workers are more than 13 times more likely to be killed at work than employees in other industries.

Clearly, these are numbers that cannot be accepted. The status quo should not be an option.

The vast majority of road freight operators work within the existing guidelines and rules, but anyone who does not should be brought to account before there are far more drastic consequences for everyone involved.

Employees are any company's greatest asset, and the safety of those employees in the workplace is paramount.

And when that workplace is something as public as our major roads and highways, a rule breach or accident all too often ends with permanent consequences.

What do you think?

Write a letter to the editor, or e-mail editor@bendigoadvertiser.com.au