

Transport Workers' Union of Australia

National Office

a. 388-390 Sussex St, Sydney NSW 2000

t. 02 8114 6500

ABN 18 559 030 246



www.twu.com.au

National Secretary
Michael Kaine

11 October 2021

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts

By email: minister@communications.gov.au

Dear Minister,

As you know, the Transport Workers' Union represents the hardworking men and women in freight and logistics who keep Australia moving, including workers at Australia Post's parcels subsidiary, StarTrack.

In light of your comments made recently about these workers exercising their legal rights as "the worst kind of old-style union thuggery", we write to facilitate a meeting between you and StarTrack workers so that you may hear about the attacks they're facing on their jobs.

These are workers forced to make a terrible choice: take industrial action, or sign a permission slip for their jobs to be outsourced.

Workers deferred negotiations over their terms and conditions to support their employer during the pandemic, but demand and revenues skyrocketed. Despite this, StarTrack management is determined to participate in the industry-wide race to the bottom that is decimating good, secure transport jobs.

This is a crisis that Federal Government inaction has caused. Unregulated supply chains are smashed through the 'Amazon Effect' of cost-cutting from the top and competitive threat from exploitative gig models like AmazonFlex.

Alarming, the TWU is investigating possible sham contracting at StarTrack following reports of improper payment arrangements with labour hire workers. We note that this has been a longstanding issue at Australia Post, following an ABC expose in 2015 which revealed underpayments of contractors, including net pay at just \$1.10 per parcel.

We are sure you would agree, an increase in insecure, unsafe and potentially illegal work arrangements is not tolerable at a government-owned transport operator. Your inflammatory comments were therefore grossly misdirected at the workers using the legal framework available to them to protect themselves and their families.

On the contrary, StarTrack workers are experiencing significant mistreatment, including:

- Rampant outsourcing of work to the tune of 50-70% in some yards;
- Months of delay tactics during bargaining, while StarTrack management refuses workers' reasonable claims for job security protections;
- Bullying and intimidation of union members including threatening to revoke their overtime, which may amount to adverse action; and
- The sacking of a labour hire worker after she queried a drop in pay following a StarTrack directive to return pay rates to the Award.

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Please respond to our invitation by Friday 15th October so that a meeting can be arranged with StarTrack workers at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Kaine', is written over a light grey circular stamp.

Michael Kaine
National Secretary, Transport Workers' Union

CC. Michelle Rowland MP, Shadow Minister for Communications