



RTEA - Proud of its Union Heritage

# NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2024

## Vale Colin Cooper

*John Lane*

**I emailed Retired Telecommunications Employees Association members on Friday, 9th August 2024, of the sad news that Colin Cooper passed away on Thursday, 1st August 2024.**



Members will remember Col as the State Secretary of our Union and the Federal President over several decades.

I also remember Col as a 1958-year technician in training, the same year as I was. During Col's period in office, I was a Branch State Councillor, State Vice President and Federal Councillor; as a result, I got to know him very well, and we became close friends.

During Col's period in office, many changes came to the workplace. The Union had to contend with the impact of new technologies and the new competitive environment for delivering telecommunication services. Management sought to downsize staff numbers affecting members' career opportunities and employment prospects. Through Col's leadership and the support of members, the Union's response was to face these challenges with the key objective of providing the best possible outcomes for members.

The 1970s were turbulent times when the Union fought for and won a shorter working week including a nine-day fortnight and significant wage increases.

More was to come in 1978, when the Union faced a significant dispute over the introduction of new exchange technology, in the first instance, ARE 11 and AXE technologies. Telecom's objective was to reduce technical staff numbers significantly. The dispute's outcome achieved greater acceptance of the Union's position. As a result, there were two major industrial agreements (MEMO and CEMO for metropolitan and country exchange maintenance organisations, respectively). The industrial agreements detailed the principles for a staff organisation within an exchange district, offering a more progressive technical staff structure. These agreements were to last more than fifteen years. The late Bob Parkinson, Bruce Maclean, and our current members Bruce Coxall and Paul Rewhorn were heavily involved.

Shortly after I became a member of the NSW Branch Council, Col encouraged me to take on the roles of State Vice President and Federal Councillor. The Union was facing a range of management-initiated reorganisations. Col entrusted me with leading the national reorganisation of PABX maintenance and restructuring the City of Sydney operations district. Both organisations were about to face the threat of competition on a significant scale. I will never forget the confidence that Col showed in me.

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RETIRED TELECOMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

Important Notice

We are now unable to accept cheque payments

Over the next couple of years, banks will be withdrawing cheques. Already, some banks, including our Southern Bank are no longer accepting deposits into customer accounts made by cheques.

Therefore, if you need to make a payment to the Association you will need to use Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT):

Retired Telecommunications Employees Association
Great Southern Bank :
BSB 814-282
eSaver Account No: 10642769

RETIRED TELECOMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

Office Bearers

Table listing office bearers: President (John Lane), Secretary (Bruce Muirhead), Treasurer (Alan Bassman), Assistant Secretary (Bruce Noake), Welfare Officer (Peter Hack), Vice President (Colin McQueen), Vice President (Bruce Coxall), and Editor (Paul Rewhorn). Each entry includes contact details like phone numbers and email addresses.

Committee

Trevor Anderson, John Bryce, Allan Fairbairn, Bob Hamblion, Vince Haywood, Terry Livingstone, John McAuliffe, Arthur McCarroll, Paul Rewhorn, Barry Robinson, Garry Masman, Ron Milosh, Warren Morley, Lee Walkington.

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## Vale Colin Cooper (cont'd)

Likewise, customer installation was undergoing a significant change. To the Union, management seemed content to retreat from the customer equipment market despite the ongoing appreciable profits and demand. Again, Vince Haywood and Jim Hall provided leadership by showing management that there were viable means of maintaining market share. Col and NSW Branch were always in full support.

It is appropriate to mention that the Union achieved these successes during a challenging period when Col was in office. I am proud of our Union because it has always canvassed its members' opinions on issues. Democracy was never out of the thoughts of our officials and other elected representatives.

Turning to current times. Col spent several years in an aged care facility in Avalon. Col is survived by his wife, Peggy and three children.

The family are holding a private ceremony for Colin. Peggy has informed me that she is organising a celebration of his life for all his friends to attend. **This special event will be on the evening of Friday, 13th September 2024, at the Petersham RSL Club.** Peggy cordially invites members of our Association to attend. More details will follow in the next newsletter. Since my email, many members have emailed their memories of Col; these messages are in this newsletter.

I am confident all members will join me in extending our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to Peggy, Colin's children and his many friends within the Union movement.

Thanks for the update John . Col will be sadly missed by union members who he worked hard for. Family now have closure can move on.

Col Cooper RIP  
Regards John McAuliff

I am sad to hear of his passing. I spent many years with him as a branch councillor.

A good man missed.  
Gerald McDermott

Hi John, sad news indeed. Col was a great fellow and on several occasions when we were negotiating wage rises for instructors he taught me the skill of negotiating.

He was a fellow all admired.

Regards,  
Peter Jordan

This is indeed very sad news. Colin was in the same, first year section 13, as a TIT, in 1958, as I was, and he was always a champion bloke.

I had the pleasure of meeting up with him, from time to time, particularly at our 1958 reunions, and he along with our fellow section 13 attendees, always had great times together.

My condolences to all of the Cooper family and RIP Col.

Allan Crouch

Oh John it's so sad - an end of an era

Deb (Debra Schoer)

Very sad news, the information of Colin Cooper.

I was a "1961 TRAINEE" and over those years got to know Col well.

My Wife Leone and I will be at PETERSHAM R.S.L. on that evening.

Thank you for the information.  
Robert Nowfel

RIP Col,  
I remember your impassioned talks at Sydney Town Hall

Alex Crow

I am extremely saddened to hear of the passing of our dear colleague Col. I had the utmost respect for him in the way he conducted himself in any negotiations that he had with our management in attempting to secure fair work and pay conditions for his members. Col was very professional in executing his duties, I will be forever grateful. Rest in peace Col z

God Bless  
Roger Cefai



Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

We Return to Emu Plains for our August 2024 General Meeting

**Thursday, 22<sup>ND</sup> August 2024**  
**The Meeting commences at 11 am**

**Mark McAndrews**  
will be our  
Guest Speaker

Mark will present a  
talk on the history of  
Mobile Phones in  
Australia

**O'Donoghues Irish Pub**  
99 Great Western Highway,  
Emu Plains

Only 350 metres from Emu Plains Railway Station.  
A short walk across the car park

Our General Meeting at Emu Plains offers our members who live in Western Sydney and Blue Mountains the opportunity for a get together with former workmates and to attend a RTEA General Meeting.

Many members travel from Sydney to Emu Plains each year for this meeting. Again, they are most welcome to attend. We will have lunch at O'Donoghues after the meeting.

Members travelling from Sydney can catch a train from Central Station departing at **9.25 am**, Strathfield at **9.39 am**, Parramatta at **9.53 am**, Blacktown at **10.06 am** and Penrith at **10.30 am**. The train arrives at Emu Plains at **10.33 am**.

Members traveling from Katoomba can catch a train departing at **9.15 am** and Springwood at **9.54 am**. The train stops at all stations between Katoomba and Emu Plains. The train arrives at Emu Plains at **10.20 am**. Both trains services arrive at Emu Plains in sufficient time for the short walk to O'Donoghues Irish Pub for the meeting's 11 am start time.



The Meeting will also be held via ZOOM  
Access details will be emailed to members on  
Monday afternoon, 19<sup>TH</sup> August 2024



## Welcome to your August 2024 Newsletter

John Lane

**W**elcome to your August 2024 Newsletter.

### OUR GENERAL MEETING AT EMU PLAINS

I will start this month with a reminder that we are having our August 2024 General Meeting at O'Donoghues Irish Pub, close to Emu Plains Railway Station. The hotel is an easy 250m walk from the station.

The general meeting at Emu Plains offers a unique opportunity for members who live in Sydney's Outer West and Blue Mountains to attend. Of course, our Sydney members are always welcome to participate, and you can catch an express train service from Central, Strathfield, and Parramatta stations. O'Donoghues offers excellent catering for our lunch after the meeting.

**The meeting is on Thursday, 22<sup>ND</sup> August 2024, at 11 am.** We will have Mark McAndrews as our special guest speaker. Mark's presentation will discuss the history of mobile phones in Australia. Mark's history talk starts much earlier than analogue mobile phones of the 1980s and early 1990s.

You will find all the details for the meeting, including train timetables, in this newsletter.

### COFFS HARBOUR TRIP AWAY

A reminder: we still have vacancies for this year's annual trip away to Coffs Harbour. The trip away is from Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, to Friday, 15<sup>TH</sup> November 2024. I believe we have come up with an affordable trip; if you compare our trip away with other current trips in the same area, you will find we have come up with a great price, with most meals included starting at \$1,310 per person twin share, particularly at a time when many country motels are often fully booked. We are going away a little later this year because of heavy motel bookings.

Finally, you will see the trip's itinerary is not just confined to Coffs Harbour but also includes the hinterland around Coffs Harbour, and we travel to Grafton, Dorrigo, Bellingen, Urunga and Bowraville with lots of interests to explore.

Have a read about the trip away in this month's newsletter, and let me know if you would like to attend.

### REMEMBERING COLIN COOPER

Finally, please remember there will be a special event in September to honour Col Cooper. At this stage, I can inform you that the event will be on Friday evening, 13<sup>TH</sup> September 2024, at the Petersham RSL Club. We will update you when we have more details.

I look forward to seeing you at Emu Plains.



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**Vale Colin Cooper 1941- 2024.**  
**By Peggy Trompf**

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Colin Cooper was born to working-class parents in 1941. Raised in the western suburbs, he went to local Yagoona public schools and became a mean basketballer, soccer and footy player. He did well at school, where he developed an interest in history.

Colin began work with the PMG as a Telegram Messenger ('telegram boy') in 1957, joined the PMG Training School in 1958 as a technician trainee and became a Senior Technician in 1965. During that time, he was an active union member of the Postal and Telecommunications Technicians Association (PTTA) and, in 1966, was elected as its NSW Assistant Branch Secretary. (In 1975, the PTTA became the Australian Telecommunication Employee Association (ATEA). With continuing amalgamation, the names were changed to the ATEA/ATPOA, CWU Telecommunication and Services Branch, and the CEPU (Communications Division - Telecommunications and Services Branches).

In 1973, Colin was elected as the NSW Branch Secretary of the union. He held that position until 1995 when he became the full-time National Divisional President of the Communications Division of the CEPU.

As NSW Branch Secretary and Federal President of the Union from early 1970, he was involved in all major industrial campaigns and negotiations. These included the establishment of Telecom and Australia Post, the shorter hours and nine-day fortnight agreement of 1975, the staffing and technology disputes arising from introducing new telecommunications technology and all wage negotiations. Other activities included campaigns against the establishment of other than government telecommunications carriers and against the privatisation of government enterprises. He led major campaigns against the privatisation of Telecom.

In 1973, he became a member of the NSW Board of the Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) and was an active supporter of trade union training. Colin was an executive member of the Asian division of the International affiliate organisation the Post Telegraph and Telephone International (PTTI).

Colin served as the full-time senior union leader at the state and national level for 41 years. On his retirement in 2007, he completed an Honours degree in history and industrial relations at the University of Sydney.

I met Col at a union function in 1989. Our long and happy life together was interrupted by Colin's diagnosis of the degenerative brain disease, Frontotemporal dementia. He died peacefully in his sleep on 1 August 2024.

I hope Colin's friends, comrades, retired members and union members join me in a tribute to him, acknowledging his never-failing loyalty and service to workers.

**VENUE: 6.30 pm, 13th September Petersham RSL, 301 Trafalgar Street, Petersham ph: 95608355**



## Bogandilla Telephone Exchange

**At our general meetings, members often express their frustration about the poor service they receive from their telecommunications service providers when they have a problem. They speak about imploring a consultant to do something to resolve their service complaint and the need for repeated calls.**

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) commissioned the Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) to report to better understand who are experiencing challenges with telco services in Australia and what a complaint experience is like for them.

The CPRC's research findings were:

- 55% of Australians encountered at least one challenge with their telco services in the last twelve months
- 40% of people who did not make a complaint said they did not believe their complaint would make a difference.

Below is a copy of correspondence from a Bogandilla subscriber to the Roma District Inspector. The correspondence perhaps demonstrates that teleco service problems have been ongoing for at least 80 years, and we should not expect things to change much despite the efforts of the Telecommunications Ombudsman.

One of the subscriber's claims that the one problem with the Bogandilla switchboard is its age. He tells the District Inspector the Bogandilla switchboard has deteriorated over its 2000-year history of use.

Further, the subscriber claims that his service problem is also due to the PMG spending too much time on fancy gadgets and trying to link phones worldwide with an automatic service.

He did not realise then that one day we would need our phones linked overseas; otherwise, we would have no one to complain to when we have a service problem.

District Inspector,  
Postal & Telegraphs,  
ROMA.

May 16th, 1964.

re Bogandilla Telephone Exchange

Dear Sir,

I have been advised by the operators of same that they have resigned with a temporary grace, in which time a decision must be made regarding the service; I understand also, if it does not go to another subscriber, the phones will have to close.

Now if the latter is the case I am very disappointed with the Department's attitude, as the only logical thing to do, to save trouble, inconvenience, and expense is to shift the exchange to Dulacca or some other continuous service, and where it will have better access to the Main lines.

Surely after all the years, that exchange and its equipment has been going, and people have patiently put up with the service they have had, now when it has finally come to a show down and something really has to be done the Department could do the right thing by them and make a decent bloody job of it, once and for all. But as to creating some sort of ceremonial hoodee, about a Mouldy Moth-eaten, bloody old switchboard, that Christ probably used to ring up on, and has deteriorated to such a state that after ten points of rain, and nice dewy morning following, the bell refuses to work and it is necessary to drive seven miles, and tell the exchange you would like to ring them. And the thoughts of you, dragging it three or four miles round the country side, and having to run a string of lines after it over rough country would be the height of bloody stupidity.

And to make matters worse there are two local exchanges, only a short timeback it was three, all on one wire to Dulacca and Miles and the difficulty and hold up in getting a call through during busy hours, is completely beyond toleration.

When you consider the cost of trunk line calls to take half a day to get through, probably miss the person you want on the other end, and can't hear on the bloody line anyway, and when you stop to compare this with the services in the city and you hear of all the fancy gadgets the Department is mucking about with, talking about linking all the phones up Automatic, the world over, so as a number can be dialled in Burke and ring up a bloody Eskimo on the North Coast of Alaska. And out here in the country where a phone is really needed, we've got a bloody job to ring our local town, it doesn't make sense, does it?

I hope you will give this matter your full consideration.



RETIRED TELECOMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

# Coffs Harbour Trip Away 2024

SUNDAY, 10 NOVEMBER TO FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2024

**PRICE**  
 \$1,310 per person twin share with an extra \$350 single supplement. The price includes venue entries & meals (5 breakfasts and 4 dinners in the motel).

## Day 1 - Sunday, 10th November 2024

We will begin our travel to Coffs Harbour and have morning tea alongside the coach. We will stop at Taree for lunch and have time to enjoy a stroll along the Manning River.

Continuing our journey, we will call into the Maria River Distillery to listen to a talk and have an opportunity to purchase from their range of gins and rum. Finally, we arrive at Coffs Harbour and settle into our rooms before dinner.

## Day 2 - Monday, 11th November 2024) Grafton and Woolgoolga

Today, we journey up the Pacific Hwy to visit the City of Grafton. Grafton is named the Jacaranda City because of the Jacaranda trees throughout town. Grafton celebrates a Jacaranda Festival every year.

We will stop at a sea park for morning tea alongside the coach. We will do a town tour of Grafton, including a stop at the old Grafton Jail, built in 1893 and now heritage-listed. Then, visit the Christ Church Cathedral, constructed in 1894.

On our return to Coffs Harbour, we will stop in the beautiful seaside town of Woolgoolga, and there we will have an afternoon before our return to our motel. Our visit to Grafton is just one week after the Jacaranda



Festival, so all the trees should be in blossom.



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## COFFS HARBOUR TRIP AWAY (Cont'd)

### **Day 3 - Tuesday, 12th November 2024**

#### **Dorrigo & Bellingen**

During the morning, we drive up into the hinterland of the Coffs Harbour coast. Then, we drive across to Dorriggo Rainforest Centre, explore the information centre, and stroll on one of the walks, including a skywalk.

After working up an appetite, we head back to Bellingen, visit the old butter factory, and listen to a talk about the factory's history, which dates back to 1906. We will enjoy lunch at the factory and then have some free time to explore Bellingen before returning to the motel. **Day 4 - Wednesday, 13th November 2024**

#### **Coffs Harbour**

We will have a local day in Coffs Harbour, driving up (depending on road conditions) to the Sealy Park Lookout, 310 metres above Coffs Harbour. There, you will see spectacular views from the sky pier.

On our return, we will visit the Coffs Harbour Wildlife Sanctuary to learn about their work rescuing wildlife and enjoy the Dolphin show after a short drive to the Coffs Harbour jetty for lunch and a stroll around the harbour. We will take a walk along to the mutton bird lookout.

In the afternoon, we visit a piece of Holland in Coffs Harbour. Known as the clog barn, we explore this unique attraction that is not found anywhere else in Australia. Have the chance to explore the shop and see how they make clogs.



### **Day 5 (Thursday, 14th November 2024)**

#### **Urunga and Bowraville**

This morning, we will take a drive down to Urunga. This town is the meeting point of the Kalang and Bellinger Rivers, where both empty into the Pacific Ocean. We take in these views while wandering along the elevated Urunga boardwalk.

Next, we visit today's sweet spot: the Urunga Honey place. We will see the world of the honeybee with the glass viewing area and have an opportunity to sample the local honey.

After lunch, we take a short drive up to the small town of Bowraville. We have the afternoon to explore the folk and military museums or the township before returning to the motel for our last night away.

### **Day 6 (Friday, 15th November 2024)**

Return travel to Sydney with a refreshment break at a service centre. Lunch at Nabiac at the hotel or one of the other cafes before arriving back in Sydney in the late afternoon, after a thoroughly enjoyable trip away.