

673 of 678 DOCUMENTS

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NSW DRIVERS VOTE TO END STRIKE

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NSW train drivers vote to end strike SYDNEY._ Train drivers throughout New South Wales voted yesterday to end their costly 10-day strike. Rail services were resuming at midnight last night. A series of conferences with the NSW Labor Council and other railway unions will start today to try to find a permanent solution to the dispute over union coverage of two-man crews on the state's freight trains, the issue that caused the strike. The Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen state secretary, Mr Bernie **Willingale**, announced the result of voting around the state after a tense day in which the outcome was in doubt for hours. At midday, with about 25 depots having reported to the union's headquarters in Sydney, a union spokesman said the voting was neck and neck. Prospects for a return to work suffered a setback when Hunter Valley drivers voted against returning, despite a speech by the AFULE state president, Mr Bruce Woods, explaining the executive's return-to-work recommendation. However, soon afterwards Sydney drivers voted for a return and later results from other country centres also tended to favor an end to the strike. Mr **Willingale** said that with only a few small country centres to report, the majority in favor of ending the strike was 381 out of a membership of 4800. He said the union would meet the Labor Council today and then the two other rail unions, the Australian Railways Union and the National Union of Railway Workers. He said the AFULE wanted to solve the dispute without returning to the Arbitration Commission, which had given the union only 50 percent coverage of the combined second engineman/guard position on the new, reduced, two-man crews. The decision to return to work occurred after the Government and the State Rail Authority made it clear they would not compromise, and signs of cracks in AFULE solidarity appeared, with a handful of drivers defying their union and reporting for work. Mr **Willingale** said about 50 drivers had broken ranks. The SRA chief executive, Mr David Hill, said the strike was a sad episode. Millions of dollars in wages were lost for nothing.

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