

THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER

The Official Journal of the AWU | Spring 2024



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National Secretary's Message

G'day and welcome to the Worker!

Coming into the tail end of the year, the AWU is as busy as ever, with our National Conference taking place in Perth for the first time ever. This year, our Conference theme is Unity, Strength, and Power, focusing on how we have brought workers together, what are we fighting for, and what the AWU has achieved.

It was an incredible four days for AWU delegates, officials, and guests in WA. As my first Conference as National Secretary, it exceeded every expectation and **I want to thank everyone who made it possible, from the staff behind the scenes, to the delegates who addressed Conference.** We reflected on the massive shifts we're seeing in our industries, and how as a union we can rise to the challenges coming on the near horizon.

You can read more about our 2024 National Conference in our special wrap-up in this issue. Be on the lookout for some familiar faces from your branch!

In recent months, the AWU has also welcomed **Chris Donovan as our Assistant National Secretary.** Chris first joined the AWU as a NSW Branch organiser in 2017, where he led a campaign which won \$1.6 million in back pay for seafood processing workers.

More recently, Chris has led our campaign to protect workers exposed to silica dust around Australia. I can't think of anyone more committed to the union and workers' safety that will make a strong addition to the AWU's national leadership team.



Paul Farrow
National Secretary

As our economy finally recovers after a four-year downturn, **we've been fighting to ensure wages recover alongside it.**

This means negotiating fair enterprise agreements with some of the country's most profitable employers.

And while this year we've been up against some of Australia's most profitable employers, our unity between our branches and with other unions have made these challenging fights possible.

As we held our National Conference in Perth, far north in WA our members have been ratcheting up to **take on Australia's biggest iron ore companies.**

Our country has seen some of the best growth in the iron ore sector in over a decade, and while we celebrate the success of our industries, it is more important the workers who make them possible are paid fairly.





You can read more in this issue about our fight to re-unionise the Pilbara and what this will mean for mine workers!

At Qantas, we've partnered with the AMWU and ETU to bring our line maintenance engineers together for their **first industrial action in almost twenty years**. This began with a strike that made headlines across Australia, with almost a thousand engineers downing tools and calling for a decent offer.

Our members aren't backing down without a fight. After months of negotiations, Qantas management still refuse to come to the table with a fair offer and won't address our members' log of claims.

When times were tough, our members took the hit and accepted four years of wage freezes. Qantas is back to making billion-dollar profits but refuse to offer more than a 3% increase.

There's just one word for this behaviour – greed.

Our members work incredibly hard to get Australians where they need to go safely. Qantas simply wouldn't have the reputation it does without the efforts of its engineering workers.

It's time to value their skills and give them a fair share of those billion-dollar profits. We're

proud to stand behind Qantas Engineering Alliance members as they continue to fight for what they deserve – **a fair wage increase.**

Every worker in Australia has the right a fair go, and that includes our neighbours from the Pacific who work on our farms and aged care centres. But right now, **the laws aren't entirely fair, especially when it comes to superannuation.** Pacific Islander workers who enter Australia on the PALM scheme struggle to access their superannuation, and payments are taxed at a very high rate.

That is why the AWU is campaigning to make things fairer for PALM workers. We're calling on the Commonwealth to reduce the unfair tax rate on superannuation payments, give PALM workers more options to transfer their superannuation into retirement funds in their home countries, and make it easier for PALM workers to access their super payments. Read more about our Resolution to Super Power the Pacific in our Conference wrap-up!

Heading into the silly season, I hope everyone has a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. To our many members working through the holidays, enjoy your union-won penalty rates - and thank you for keeping our country moving. **Enjoy this issue of the Worker, and see you at work in 2025!**

Union Bargaining returns to the Pilbara

Iron ore is a global commodity, used to make steel, which is found in almost every modern building and structure in the developed world. Australia itself is home to the world's largest stores and production of iron, **and we produce 38% of the world's global exports.** For the WA economy, iron ore generates \$139.1 billion each year, and this number only continues to rise as mining giants increase production and near the limit of what ports can export.

This means tens of billions of dollars in profits every year for the mining companies based in WA. The two richest Australians – Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest – are mining bosses. Profits have boomed in the last decade off the back of rocketing iron ore prices.

But when you look at the wages and conditions of

the workers on the ground – the operators, technicians, truck drivers and mechanics responsible for carting millions of tonnes of iron ore to WA ports, **they're going backwards.**

What happened to unions?

Since unions were forced out of the Pilbara in the 1980s and '90s, mine workers have only had access to employer-dictated contracts and individual agreements, effectively removing their say within the workplace, and handing it to the bosses – whose priorities are to keep profits high and wages low.

So how can unions regain the power we lost after being locked out of the Pilbara for decades?

We're rebuilding unionism by working together. In 2013, the AWU and the Mining and Energy Union (MEU) first created the Western

Mine Workers' Alliance, so **Australia's two largest mining unions can organise as one combined force.**

And the election of the Albanese Labor Government in 2022 has given us another powerful tool in our arsenal – **the Closing Loopholes Bill.** This now means that unions have more rights at the bargaining table representing our members in the fight for a fair go.

Taking on the giants

Our fight is beginning with BHP on their South Flank and Area C sites. After refusing to bargain and no union agreement in over a decade, we've been able to force them to the table, using the expired Enterprise Agreement as a trigger for new negotiations without running a Majority Support Determination (MSD).

Last financial year alone,



BHP reported US\$28 billion from their Pilbara operations, employing 14,000 workers. This means **each Pilbara worker generated US\$2 million** – but most are only paid \$120-140K for long FIFO swings away from home in one of the hottest places on the planet.

Already, WMWA representatives have had several bargaining meetings and laid out their log of claims as endorsed by the membership – decent, secured wage increases, pay parity with other BHP sites, fair rosters, detailed classification structures, improved allowances, and no reduction to existing wages and conditions. It's a long road ahead, but our organisers are ready for the challenge.

Rio Tinto is also in our sights. No other company has made as much hay as Rio on the de-unionisation of its workforce, and it's time to set things right. We're gearing up to bring Rio Tinto back to the bargaining table

with an MSD in the coming months.

As the Pilbara's largest producer of iron ore, we know Rio Tinto has the cash to spare, with multi-billion-dollar profits already a third higher than they were a decade ago and continuing to rise each year.

While taking on the giants of any industry is no easy task, especially after decades of anti-union regulations and aggressive employers, the **WMWA is stopping at nothing to bring mine workers in the Pilbara together** to fight for a fair deal. Every week, our organisers have been onsite at mines around the Pilbara, talking to workers about the issues that matter most – wages, rosters, safety, and conditions.

Stronger together

Our national secretary, Paul Farrow, and WA Branch Secretary, Brad Gandy, visited the Pilbara this year with MEU leadership, to

show the union is seriously in their corner. And to those workers we can't see face to face, we're organising online, reaching as many remote mine workers as possible on social media.

It's getting real results, and more mine workers than ever are coming on board. **Our growth has tripled in 2024**, with several hundred members joining the Alliance in just the last few months.

With our membership continuing to grow and the experience of two unions at the helm, the WMWA is primed to win a fair deal in the Pilbara. The AWU has done this before, bargaining for **historic enterprise agreements for offshore workers at Chevron, Woodside and Inpex.**

After being locked out for decades on WA's oil & gas platforms, we fought our way back in and secured 30% pay rises for hundreds of workers. **If this is possible offshore, we can achieve it on home soil.**



Silicosis: The Unfinished Battle of William Spence Lives on

When William Spence co-founded the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) over a century ago, he could hardly have imagined that **the silent killer that claimed his life would still be haunting workers today.**

Spence, a titan of labour rights, succumbed to silicosis—a debilitating lung disease caused by inhaling crystalline silica dust from mines. If he were here now, he would be shocked to find **silicosis still menacing workers across various industries.** Yet, he would undoubtedly take pride in knowing that the union he helped forge continues to fight relentlessly against this occupational hazard.

On 1 September 2024, a significant milestone was achieved in this ongoing struggle. New Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations targeting crystalline silica exposure were introduced nationwide.

This development marks a resounding victory for the AWU and the Silica Dust Kills Campaign, which have been campaigning since 2019 to amend WHS legislation. **The goal has been clear: to secure protections for all workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica.**



Chris meeting with Sally Sitou MP



Chris Donovan

Assistant National Secretary

Crystalline silica is not an obscure mineral confined to the depths of mines; it's a common component of sand, concrete, brick, rock, and other natural substances.

This means that workers across a multitude of industries—from construction, tunnelling and manufacturing to quarrying and stonemasonry—are at risk.

The new regulations acknowledge this widespread danger, extending protections to any field dealing with materials containing at least 1% crystalline silica. It's a sweeping change that promises to **safeguard the health of countless workers represented by the AWU.**

Under the new laws, workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica dust can now demand comprehensive safety control measures. These include not just personal protective equipment (PPE), but under the new laws must also include at least one of the following:

- Isolation of workers from dust exposure;
- Fully enclosed operator cabins fitted with high-efficiency air filtration systems to ensure clean air for operators;
- Water suppression, On-tool extraction systems;
- Local exhaust and effective local exhaust ventilation system.

Additionally, If any task is considered high-risk, workers have the right to a silica risk control plan from their employer. **This plan is not a mere formality; it's a binding document that requires strict adherence.**

Should an employer fail to follow the plan, workers are entitled to cease work without penalty.

This provision is a significant step forward in holding employers accountable and ensuring that worker safety is not compromised.

Yet, amidst these advancements, a glaring concern remains. **In most states, the mining WHS regulations have not incorporated the new silica provisions.** This omission is a stark reminder that the very industry where William Spence began his fight is still lagging in protecting its workers.

Mining remains a high-risk environment for silica exposure, and without the adoption of these new regulations, miners continue to face unnecessary dangers.

This inconsistency in regulatory adoption is a call to action. **The spirit of William Spence's advocacy lives on in the efforts of the AWU, but the mission is far from complete.**

The AWU and its allies must intensify their campaigns to ensure that mining regulations catch up with the rest of the nation. Workers in every industry deserve equal protection

under the law, especially when their health and lives are at stake.

Reflecting on the journey from Spence's time to ours, it's clear that progress has been made, **but the legacy of silicosis persists.** The new WHS regulations are a testament to what collective action can achieve.

They honour the memory of those like Spence who suffered due to inadequate protections and serve as hope for current and future workers.

If William Spence were here today, he would likely express both dismay and determination; dismay that silicosis still threatens workers, but determination in seeing the union he co-founded continuing the fight.

His life's work underscores a timeless truth: **the struggle for worker safety is ongoing** and requires vigilance, solidarity, and unwavering commitment.





**Unity, Strength
and Power: three
core principles
that guide
the vision and
purpose of the
AWU.**

**At our 2024
National
Conference, we
set our sights on
how we can build
unity, strength
and power across
our union - from
the shop floor to
the bargaining
table to the halls
of Parliament.**

2024 AWU NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**STOP THE VISA RORTS IN OFFSHORE OIL & GAS | SAFETY AT WORK IS EVERYONE'S
BUSINESS | A FUTURE (ACTUALLY) MADE IN AUSTRALIA | MODERNISING LONG
SERVICE LEAVE | MINING SAFETY: STAYING VIGILANT | BRINGING BARGAINING
BACK TO THE PILBARA | SILICA DUST: MAKING PROGRESS, MAINTAINING RESOLVE
| STEEL AND IRON: FORGING AHEAD | JUSTICE FOR SHEARERS - THEN, NOW AND
ALWAYS | A BIGGER, FAIRER, BETTER PALM SCHEME | GAS PRICES AND SUPPLY |
INDUSTRY AND RESOURCES: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITY | OUR PUBLIC SERVICE
WORKERS: NOTHING BUT THE BEST |
UNITY STRENGTH, POWER: AWU INDUSTRY STANDARDS.**

STRONGER TOGETHER: THE AWU STANDS WITH THE ACTU!

CONFERENCE
RESOLUTION

2024 has been a uniquely challenging year for Australia's labour movement. We're seeing unprecedented division surrounding the administration of the CFMEU Construction Division, and the entire union movement called into question.

Throughout this turmoil, union leaders, spearheaded by ACTU Secretary Sally McManus and ACTU President Michele O'Neil have stood tall in the face of threats and abuse. This is reprehensible and inexcusable. The AWU proudly stands with the ACTU.

Our Conference delegates resolved to commend the leadership of the ACTU Executive, recognise the intense challenges associated with leading the ACTU, condemn those who seek to threaten, divide and discredit the Labour movement, and to support the ACTU as it leads our movement to a positive outcome.



OFFSHORE ALLIANCE: WINNING FOR OIL & GAS WORKERS



700 union members threatening to walk off the job in pursuit of union conditions simultaneously across projects that produce 11% of the world's LNG. A 40% increase in world gas prices overnight as a result. This is what union power has achieved in the offshore sector. The Offshore Alliance, a partnership between the AWU WA and MUA WA Branches, has been fighting for WA oil & gas workers since 2018.

OA organisers Ross Kumeroa and Jason Lipscombe joined Senior National Legal Officer Zach Duncalfe and industry analyst Saul Kavonic to discuss how industrial action at Woodside and Chevron made global headlines, put massive pressure on employers, and resulted in members locking in huge increases to wages and conditions as a result.

Workers always have the power. Offshore Alliance members haven't just locked in better pay for themselves - they are lifting the standard for the entire offshore oil & gas sector. We hope this talk inspired AWU members in other industries to stand together and fight for a better deal at work!



Our AWU delegates are the lifeblood of our union, who make organising possible on worksites around the country! It's through them that we're able to keep up with what our thousands of members are saying, what they need, and how they want to fight.

We also celebrated the Campaign of the Year and Yossi Berger Awards, recognising members and officials who have gone the extra mile in their site to grow the union, overcome safety hazards, or secure a better outcome for members.

Finally, our Conference awarded Life Membership to three stalwarts of the AWU, for their immense contribution to our union over many years of service.

These awards recognise the hard work and dedication of AWU members who work every day to build unity, strength and power on their worksite.



Vic Delegate of The Year
Johnny Keys
Murphy Pipe & Civil



QLD Delegate of The Year
Karen Johns
Disability Services Queensland



TAS Delegate of The Year
Ashley Browning
Inghams Enterprises



WA Delegate of The Year
Tom Foster
Cockburn Cement



SA Delegate of The Year
Terry Bails
Visy Glass Adelaide



NSW Delegate of The Year
Len Edwards
Infrabuild Newcastle



OA Delegate of The Year
Tobias Forsyth
Tidewater

Campaigns of the year

Friendly Society Private hospital, Bundaberg QLD.

Members at Friendly Society Private Hospital ran a strong campaign, growing from 3 members in 2019 to 53 members in 2023. These members were able to secure a new EBA after 10 years of the hospital refusing to bargain.

Total Drains, NSW

Through the dedication and hard work of delegates George and Nigel, Total Drains' members grew by 40 members in a short time and reached 80% density. With the power they built onsite, they were able to address long overdue serious safety concerns.

2024 Yossi Berger Awards

Alcoa Portland, VIC

Vanessa has worked tirelessly with the Victorian Branch, leading persistent and successful campaigns on site safety. Her work exposed numerous hazards and safety breaches that she took to and won with the regulator. Her actions singlehandedly revitalised Alcoa's safety culture.

Queensland Health, QLD

The QLD Branch has been running a landmark campaign addressing violence against frontline workers in hospitals across their state, revealing that 70% of security and staff reported being assaulted at work. From this, the branch achieved increased funding for security and commitment to proper PPE onsite.



Life Member
Harry Lumanovski
Victorian Branch President



Life Member
Wayne Swan
ALP National President



Life Member
Tony Beers
QLD Central District Secretary

MODERNISING LONG SERVICE LEAVE

Long service leave is a proudly Australian invention and goes back as far as the 19th century. Australian governments long understood the importance of giving workers an opportunity to rest, refresh their health, and spend time with loved ones.

But today, we're working longer and harder than ever, and long service leave as we know it is no longer fit for purpose for millions of workers. With insecure work more common, less than a quarter of workers have been with their employer for over 10 years. Around 22% of Australian workers are also casual; In industries like forestry and agriculture, this climbs to over 40%.

That's why AWU Conference resolved to recognise the importance of accessible long service leave. It commended states and industries that have developed 'portability' schemes that allow workers to take long service leave after 10 years of work, regardless of how many employers they had in that time.

Delegates also called on Federal Labor to prioritise development of a portable long service leave scheme for all workers regardless of their state or industries. A national scheme would give every worker the right to earned time away!



SILICA DUST: MAKING PROGRESS, MAINTAINING RESOLVE

Every year, over half a million workers in Australia are exposed to deadly silica dust. Without the proper control measures, thousands risk developing silicosis, a debilitating, incurable and fatal disease.

Since 2019, the AWU has campaigned tirelessly to eradicate this silent killer from Australian worksites. Last year, all State and Territory WHS Ministers finally pledged to ban the production and supply of high-risk engineered stone products. Then in September of this year, ministers introduced further regulations for other industries dealing with silica dust.

These landmark reforms are an important step, but it's not the end of the right. Importantly, these new regulations do not extend to the mining industry, where the AWU will continue to fight for greater protections for workers.

The AWU National Conference continues to recognise the real and serious risks silica dust exposure found in a number of AWU industries, commends members and officials for their persistent work to bring greater attention to this issue, and commends State and Territory governments on recent reforms protecting workers in at-risk industries.

Conference delegates also affirmed that every worker in every industry deserves protection from this deadly dust.



AWU Delegates and officials updated our Conference on the latest news, wins, and issues relating to our industries, from national round-ups to site reports.

AGRICULTURE

Victorian Branch President and Lead Country Organiser Ross Kenna reported on the AWU's continued success for Agriculture members across Australia in lifting wages, fighting exploitation, and securing better protections for PALM workers. Every branch has seen significant growth in agriculture membership, especially in PALM, with more to come!



ALUMINIUM



Michael Lally reported on the AWU's support through redundancies at Alcoa's Kwinana refinery, and Selwyn Jones on Alcoa Portland, including WHS issues and a new power deal.



AVIATION

National Aviation Organiser Mark Fagan reported on behalf of hundreds of AWU Qantas engineers taking their first strike action in 20 years as they fight for a decent EA. After four years of wage freezes, Qantas refuse to come to the table with a decent offer. Qantas members are in for the long haul and prepared to do whatever it takes - no more delays, it's time for fair pay!



CONSTRUCTION

Jason Bourke reported on his role as a site delegate on the North East Link Project in Melbourne, and the importance of walking delegates on major construction projects to grow membership, and act on WHS issues, members' concerns and represent workers when they need it. The AWU is proud to represent members in Civil Construction across Australia!



GLASS



Ben Grabovic from Oceania Glass reported on the strong new EA, and Ian Thomas from Visy Glass reported on major issues including energy prices, and attacks from management.



MINING

WA Branch Organiser Andy Duffy reported on the massive contribution the mining industry makes to the country with 100,000 jobs; the potential for membership growth; the major challenges to organising, including the remoteness of mine sites, and hostile employers; and the progress of the Mining Alliances in NSW and WA.



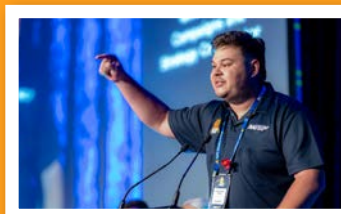
OIL & GAS

Senior National Legal Officer Zach Duncalfe reported on the huge gains made in the Offshore Sector across tier-1 operators, including Woodside, Chevron, Inpex, and Shell. Zach reported on progress securing good outcomes for members across Australia, including Santos and Beach Energy in SA, and Esso in VIC. We also celebrated that Ampol QLD and Viva in VIC are 100% AWU union sites! The AWU proudly represents every part of the oil & gas industry in Australia.



PUBLIC SECTOR

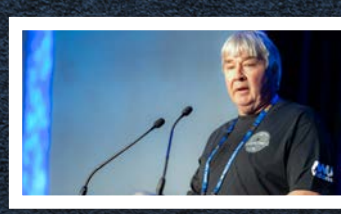
QLD Campaigns and Strategy Coordinator Joey Kaiser reported on the challenges facing our public sector workers - workplace health and safety, decent conditions, and the fight for fair wage increases that keep up with the cost of living. The AWU is committed to fighting for a fair go for all of our public sector members!



STEEL



Glenn Leake reported on key issues facing the industry - energy cost and dumping - and news from BlueScope. Andrew Axford reported on WHS and management issues at Laverton Steel.



BRINGING BARGAINING BACK TO THE PILBARA

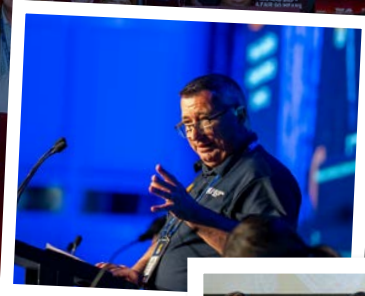
We're always stronger together - and the unity of our Mining Alliances with the Mining and Energy Union in NSW and WA are seeing huge results for our members.

The Western Mine Workers' Alliance has commenced bargaining with BHP in the Pilbara, with Rio Tinto to follow soon. WMWA is fighting for an EA that will make a difference for members, including:

- Annual pay increases of at least 5%
- Pay equity on site and across BHP/Rio Tinto worksites
- A \$10,000 annual retention bonus for eligible workers
- Expanded rostering options
- No reduction to existing wages and conditions.

At the National Conference, delegates recognised the importance of union-led bargaining in addressing

substandard pay and conditions in the iron ore mine sector, commended the Federal Labor Government's support of WMWA's bargaining efforts, called on employers to come to the table and bargain in good faith, and called on all Pilbara mine workers to support the union's efforts to bring bargaining back to the Pilbara!



JUSTICE FOR SHEARERS: THEN, NOW AND ALWAYS

It was shearers who founded our great Union in 1886, and the AWU has proudly fought for our shearing members ever since.

But in a return to the 19th century, today companies are demanding shearers work for poverty wages. Meanwhile, a lack of regulatory oversight means the AWU is obstructed from taking action - and it's our regional Australians who are paying the price.

We need to return power to the shearers, not the contractors, to restore the wages and conditions of the pastoral industry. We need a national regulator with the power to enact real change, including:

- Licencing and registration for shearing contractors
- A ban on sham contracting in shearers
- Upholding right of entry powers for permit holders
- Expanding the rights of permit holders by removing the 24-hour notice period.

To make this happen, AWU Conference delegates resolved that the AWU National Office work directly with the Commonwealth to develop a national regulation with enforceable powers. Shearers deserve justice!





The WA Branch reflected on a huge two years, notching up 12,000 members. We've seen massive growth across the oil & gas, mining, and food processing industries. The past two years haven't been without challenges, particularly for workers in the timber industry and at the Alcoa refinery, but WA has stood strong. Our branch continue to fight every day for our members - we're stronger together!

The QLD Branch has campaigned hard to build union power, with huge dividends. The branch is growing, and with a 50/50 split between regional and metropolitan membership, and our vast coverage, our branch team has risen admirably to the challenge. Major campaigns include QLD Health, Wilmar Sugar and Youth Detention, where we have secured major wins for members, and we will keep on fighting!



The NSW Branch has focused on building our power in 2022-24. We're proud to have exceeded our 2023 target of 20,000 members, thanks to the hard work of the entire branch team. We've trained over 400 delegates and HSRs, negotiated 63 EAs and recovered over \$1.1M in stolen wages and settlements. New processes in our organising team mean we're ready to hit the ground running in 2025!

The VIC Branch continues to proudly fight for members. As the only Victorian union with a local organiser in every region, we remain committed to every single member, no matter where you live and work in Victoria. We've negotiated 102 EAs and recovered \$4.3M in leave entitlements and wages. Safety remains our top priority, and we'll never give up the fight to hold bosses accountable at work.



The TAS Branch is seeing strong wages growth and increasing density, particularly in mining and dairy processing. However, we face ongoing challenges, and continue to defend our members' industries in the face of significant opposition. We fight every day for thousands of members and their families across regional Tasmania, to protect jobs and build positive outcomes for our union.

The SA Branch is proud to report an increase in membership after many years of significant challenges. We've also reclaimed over \$1M for AWU members in the past year. Our small team continue to build our density in agriculture, secure good outcomes for Council workers, and support members at Whyalla Steelworks. We are looking forward to a strong future for our Shipbuilding and submarine members.

A FUTURE (ACTUALLY) MADE IN AUSTRALIA

The Labor government's Future Made in Australia scheme will see at least \$22.7 billion invested in domestic manufacturing over the next decade - the most significant commitment to the sector and its workers in living memory.

But this huge potential is marred by a failure to commit to local industry in procurement. Without requirements to use local products like steel, aluminium and glass in government projects, the sector will continue to face an uncertain future. We risk losing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish tens of thousands of well-paid, secure manufacturing jobs.

AWU National Conference recognises the damage caused by deficient procurement policies under this and previous Federal Governments. It notes Labor's commitment to reforming local

procurement policy ahead of the 2022 election, and calls on it to uphold this pledge to workers and the nation. The government must implement strong, specific local procurement policies - especially for major energy and infrastructure projects, such as the Illawarra Offshore Wind Area.



IT'S TIME TO SUPER POWER THE PACIFIC!

The Pacific Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme is key to Australia - both as a labour source in agriculture, meat processing and the care industry, and to maintain strong relationships with Pacific Nations.

The AWU has represented agriculture workers for 138 years, and we're the proud union for PALM workers. We've made significant advancements in the PALM Scheme, but there is more to be done.

Right now, super is extremely hard for PALM workers to access, and is taxed at an unfair rate, costing thousands of dollars. The AWU also has ongoing concerns about unreasonable deductions from PALM workers' pay packets. That is why National Conference recognised the importance of the PALM Scheme in Australia, commended the Federal Labor Government's recent efforts to improve the scheme, recognised the continued need for reform, and called on the

Commonwealth to make important changes to ensure PALM workers can access their super.

Every worker in Australia deserves a fair go - and that includes our neighbours in the Pacific!





The Hon. Roger Cook
Premier of
Western Australia



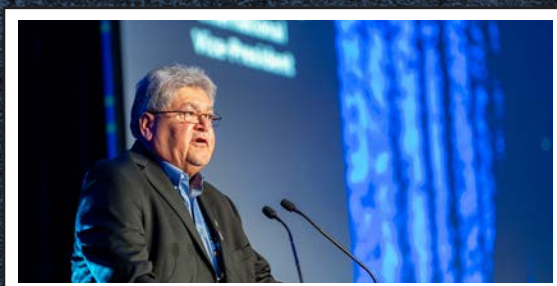
The Hon. Clare O'Neil
Minister for Housing
and Homelessness



We were honoured to welcome international and Australian trade union leaders, Australian leaders and policymakers and inspirational speakers to our National Conference.



The Hon. Murray Watt
Minister for Employment
and Workplace Relations



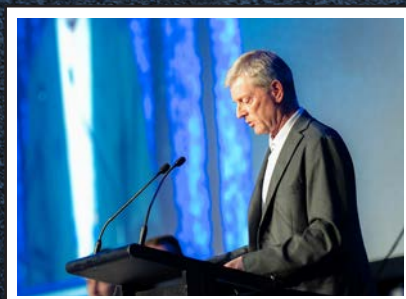
Emil Ramirez
United Steelworkers
International Vice-President



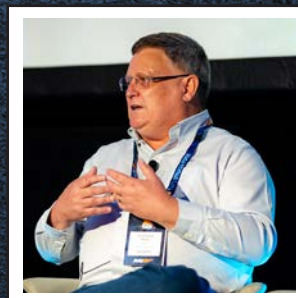
Felix Anthony
Fiji Trades Union Congress
National Secretary



The Hon. Bill Shorten
Minister for NDIS
AWU LIFE MEMBER



Atle Høie
IndustriALL
General Secretary



Grahame Kelly
Mining & Energy Union
General Secretary



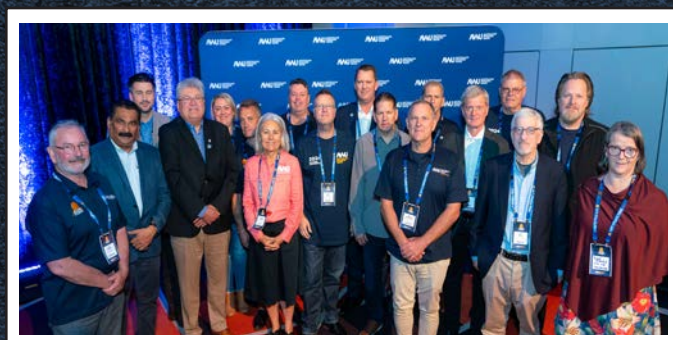
Tony Maher
Mining & Energy Union
General President



Brad Ness OAM
Paralympian
Gold Medallist



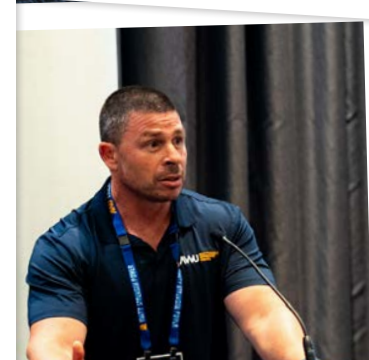
The Hon. Wayne Swan
Cbus Chair and
ALP National President
AWU LIFE MEMBER



AWU Leadership and International Guests



Thank you to all the delegates and officials who participated in our industry workshops and breakout sessions!



Message from the Secretary

It's been a busy Spring at the AWU Queensland Branch, with workers in sugar, aviation, aluminium, health, and so many more all fighting back in the workplace!

After nearly 18 months of negotiations and industrial action, a majority of workers at Wilmar Sugar have agreed to a new EA. The agreement includes a **significant pay increase, better conditions**, and the conversion of 35 fixed-term or seasonal workers to **become permanent**. This outcome was fought for by AWU members over months of industrial action.

Our members went toe-to-toe with a giant multinational corporation that was willing to do whatever it took to save a dollar. We prevailed by standing together united and not backing down until Wilmar listened to the demands of our members. **Great work everyone, organised labour will always beat organised greed!**



Qantas members on strike at Brisbane Airport

Meanwhile, aircraft maintenance engineers at Qantas have downed tools and taken industrial action for the first time **in almost twenty years**. In the past decade, our members have copped 4 years of wage freezes, meaning pay has increased just 12% over ten years.

Qantas is back to making billion-dollar profits after the pandemic, so it's time for management to come to the table with a fair offer. **Our members won't give up until we secure an EA in line with aviation industry standards.**

Workers at G.James have also dug in, and after 18 months took industrial action to escalate the campaign for a fair EA.



Stacey Schinnerl
QLD Branch Secretary

After three weeks of work bans and two full-day stoppages, G.James returned to the table with a **15% wage increase over three years and an increase in shift allowance** to 15% on afternoons and 30% on nights.



The G James negotiating team

Up in Townsville, workers at Glencore Port have rallied together in their fight for a new EA with a fantastic result. Membership soared to over 80% through negotiations, backed by AWU Delegate Sharpey, and under the new EA, some members will see a **22% wage increase** over four years!



Sharpey leading the EA fight!

To every AWU member who joined our fight in these past few months – **thank you**. With your help, we are winning the fight to build power, increase wages, and secure better outcomes for workers across Queensland!

Forestry Action Plan NSW Government Consultation

The AWU NSW Branch is fighting to ensure the NSW Government is delivering for timber workers, and their communities as they continue to work towards the establishment of the Great Koala Park on the Mid North Coast.

Recently, an AWU delegation met with Ministers, the crossbench and the Nationals to lobby on behalf of the entire timber industry. **Forestry operations and timber jobs support over 15,000 workers across the state.** In fact, up to 1 in 10 people in some regional areas work in the industry!



AWU Forestry Members

This is a big industry, but it has an even bigger impact. Timber products from regional NSW make it possible to build homes and keep the mining, transport, and retail sectors strong.

Our delegates reminded Members of Parliament of the important role that the forestry industry and timber workers play in our state's emergency response coordination and the economic output of the industry.

This was also a good opportunity for our delegation to flesh out issues in the industry,

including the:

- **Sustainability** of current and future forestry operations in NSW;
- **Demand for timber products**, particularly as relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail;
- The **future of softwood and hardwood** and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs;
- The **role of State Forests** in maximising the delivery of a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes.
- Opportunities to realise **carbon and biodiversity benefits** and support carbon and biodiversity markets, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks;
- Greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risks to forests.

Thanks to all our delegates, especially Andrew Candie, Bronwyn Ellis, Luke Secombe and Brent Smith for representing the AWU and timber workers with passion.

Your efforts are helping protect the forestry industry in NSW.

Our delegates efforts further pressured the NSW Government to release its Forestry Industry Action Plan – which had been indefinitely delayed.



Tony Callinan
NSW Branch Secretary



Bargaining with Industry Giants



Brad Gandy
WA Branch Secretary

The WA Branch has been hard at work, continuing to actively negotiate several agreements with some of the state's largest employers.

Bargaining with Capral Aluminium, Patties Foods, CBH Gain Handlers, DBCA,

Main Roads, and BHP holds incredible potential for improving the conditions of workers across our state.

On top of this, Branch Secretary Brad Gandy has been on the road in our new Members Mini-van, touring through the North West Geraldton and Kalgoorlie with our Organisers, speaking with members directly.



AWU Team and Main Roads Members

On October 1, we also launched our new AWU Journey Cover giving all AWU, WMWA and Offshore Alliance members certainty when they leave home on their journey to work. **Paid-up AWU, WMWA, or Offshore Alliance member are now entitled to AWU Journey Cover**, which provides up to \$2,000 a week for up to 2 years if you find yourself injured on your way to work and lump-sum payments of up to \$100,000 if you find yourself permanently disabled or pass away on your way to work.

As our union grows, the more we can offer to ensure members are secure in all aspects of their work.

The WA Branch has also hosted Delegate Training in our Kalgoorlie and Perth Offices to empower our workplace Delegates to best represent and negotiate on behalf of their workmates.

Thank you to all the Delegates who attended training, and if you're a Delegate or want to be one, contact our office on 08 9221 1686.

Giving back to our members is always at front of mind, that's why we recently initiated our branch competitions – Fuel Fridays, Thanking Union Dads, and Royal Show Ticket competitions have helped **ensure our members have more money and time to spend with their families.**

We would like to give a special shout-out and acknowledge all our members at Alcoa's Kwinana Alumina Refinery who were relocated or made redundant, and to those who are retiring, we wish you well with your next adventure.

We also acknowledge the pain and uncertainty facing our Albemarle Lithium and BHP Nickel West members who are facing an uncertain future, and re-commit our Organisers and union to supporting you during this transition.



WA Branch team at the AWU National Conference

At the AWU we know that our members don't stop working and neither do we.

Message from the Victorian Secretary

It's been a big couple of months for our AWU Victoria members. I'm incredibly proud of the solidarity shown at Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Mt Buller, and Mt Baw Baw, where members are taking Protected Industrial Action for fair weekend penalty rates. **Despite Alpine Resorts Victoria's efforts to sideline us, our resolve has only strengthened.** We're also standing firm against intimidating behaviour, taking the fight to the Fair Work Commission.



Mt Buller members united during industrial action

A real win came on 1 July, with new laws boosting rights for union delegates. These changes give delegates the facilities and training they need to support their workmates effectively. We're also working hard to ensure the new silica dust regulations are enforced, keeping our members safe from harm. Meanwhile, a big victory for over 600 members at BlueScope Western Port saw **\$3 million in compensation secured** for unfair leave deductions, plus retention of their 250% public holiday penalty rate.

In Geelong, our Infrabuild members are holding strong for a fairer deal. **Their courage reminds us why we do what we do.**

We're also about to ramp up action with our DEECA firefighters. Six months after bargaining was supposed to start, the department finally came to the table following an AWU-led dispute at the Fair Work Commission. With 87% of members

citing wages as the top priority, our survey showed no appetite for the government's current wage policy. Our members—especially women—under the Field Staff Agreement are among the lowest-paid in the Victorian Government, and it's time to change that.



Ronnie Hayden
Victorian Branch Secretary

These firefighters don't just fight fires; they prepare for the fire season, lead flood recovery, respond to animal disease outbreaks, and were on the front lines during COVID-19. Despite this, the department continues to push for the government wage policy plus a small cost of living bonus, which our members have rejected. We've launched a Protected Industrial Action campaign, and PABO documents are being submitted this week.

Adding to the challenges, FFM Vic's restructure is set to reduce 208 net roles, affecting 22 AWU members directly, with several depots slated for closure. We're submitting a formal response and will continue fighting to protect our members' jobs.



Secretary and Organisers onsite at skifields

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we'll keep pushing for what's fair.



Gary Henderson
Acting South Australian
Branch Secretary

Spring has been a challenging season for the SA branch, with Whyalla GFG continuing to struggle as domestic and international pressures make it difficult for the Australian steel market.

Internationally, China are dumping steel in Australia as their market demands weaken, which puts downward price pressure on Australian steel.

Compounding these issues is the continued mismanagement of the steelworks. The blast furnace has been offline again, further strangling production. GFG made 50 white-collar employees redundant in August, and suppliers to the site have complained of late payments.

GFG are adamant it will make it through to transform lower emission green steel. **The town of Whyalla and our nation need the steelworks to be a productive steel-making site.**

Perfection Fresh, which is one of the largest Tomato growers in Australia, has obtained

South Australian Branch Update

a virus and was ordered by authorities to destroy the plants and undertake cleaning of over 20 glasshouses to eradicate the virus.

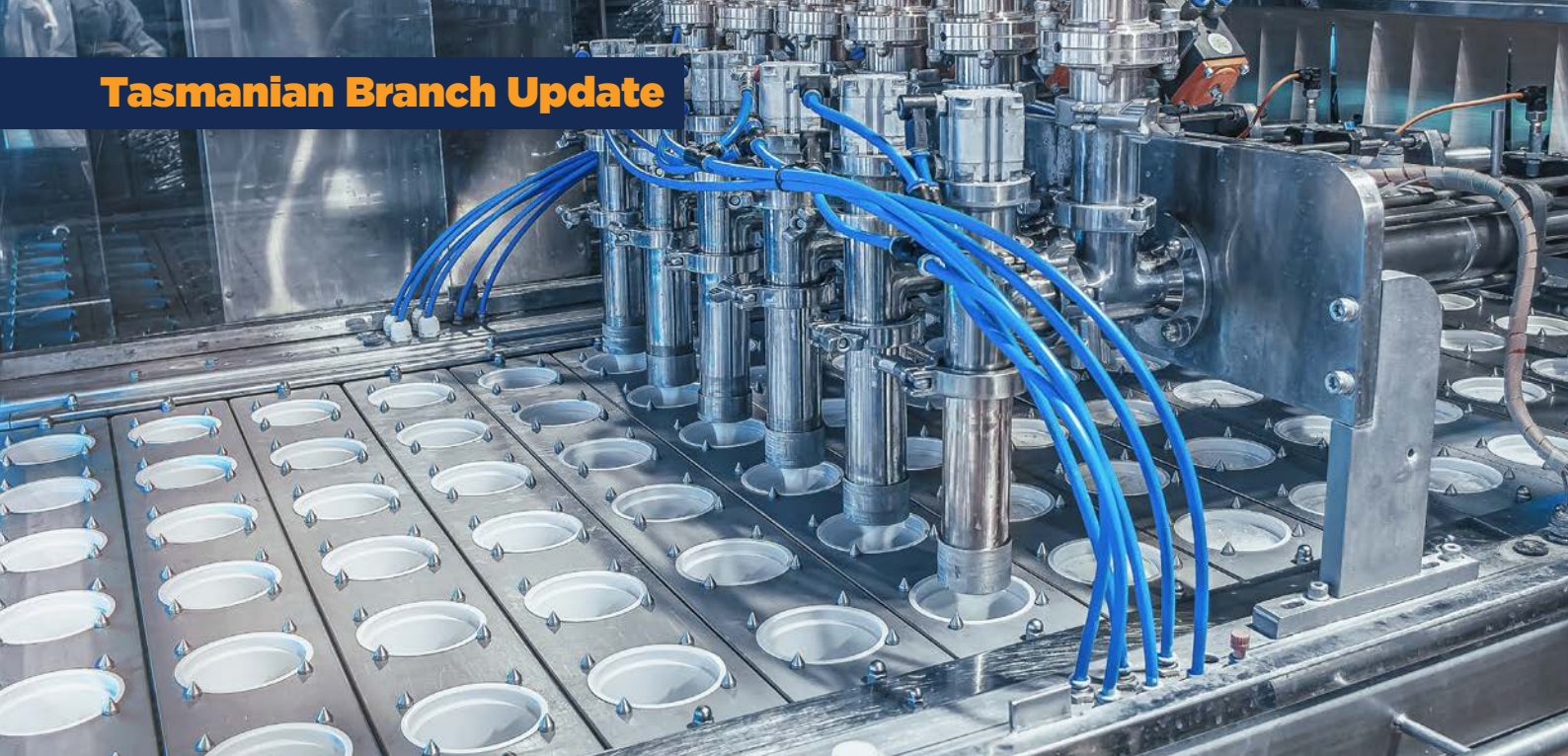
This has resulted in many workers unable to continue work at the site. The AWU has been working with authorities and employers to keep over 200 PALM workers in work, transferring them to other farms in gainful employment.

We continue to grow our membership in horticulture, with great work from our team pursuing underpayments and dodgy IFA's that still exist in the industry.

On a good note, we previously reported ASC Shipbuilding owed about 100 workers over \$100,000. This matter has been finalised with the **official figures of backpay to a total of \$424,370 to 289 workers for unpaid shift penalties.** This is another great result from the hard-working AWU SA branch team.

Playford Council still continue to take industrial action to pursue better wage outcomes, and are **determined to dig in stronger than ever.** ASC has also **secured good wage outcomes** after a lengthy dispute.





Bringing Tasmanian Dairy Pay and Conditions up to Industry Standards!

Down in Tasmania, the cost of living continues to go up – but compared to the mainland, wages are dragging behind.

It's simply not fair that workers can receive **25% less than colleagues producing the same product with the same label** across the Bass Strait.

That's why the Tasmanian Branch continues to make every effort to secure decent EA's for members that mean wages stop going backwards.

Members at Lactalis Australia, the parent company of Tamar Valley yoghurt, and their union have fought hard this year and won an **11.5% pay rise over 18 months**, with a 7% wage increase in the first year, and 4.5% in the second. 89% of workers voted yes to the new EA, which also includes:

- A coldstore **allowance**
- A provision where **mental health** first aiders trained and must be on site.
- **10 days' access** to paid mental health and domestic violence leave
- **Retained all provisions/conditions** in current agreement

Negotiations began at the start of the year, and members were ready to vote up protected industrial action if that was what it took to get a fair deal.



Ian Wakefield
Tasmanian Branch Secretary

Thankfully, management have come to the table and compromised on a fair offer which incorporates **most of the members' claims, without losing any existing benefits.**

Members agreed to a shorter agreement to bring their bargaining cycle in line with Lactalis' Bendigo site – so next December, workers will be even more united, with **both processing sites bargaining together** for a better deal.

Like many industries, Tasmanian workers are paid significantly less than other Lactalis employees on the mainland, despite the cost of living actually being higher than in most regional areas.

It's hoped that this agreement will set a new higher standard, send a message to the bosses – **it's time Tasmanian workers receive equal pay!**

‘Waltzing Matilda’s AWU Origins

Did you know the AWU helped to inspire Australia’s unofficial national anthem? Banjo Paterson’s ‘Waltzing Matilda’ tells the story of a Shearer’s Strike that took place on the 2nd of September 1894 – 130 years ago. Paterson was a unionist, bush poet, and journalist, whose legacy on Australia’s history is commemorated in our \$10 note. However, **his close relationship with our nation’s early labour movement is often forgotten.**

In 1894, the pastoralist owners of Queensland’s Dagworth Station refused to employ unionists while slashing the pay and living conditions of their workers. Both the AWU and AWUQ demanded the re-instatement of 30 shillings a week for shed hands, and **strikes broke out across New South Wales and Queensland.**



Dagworth Station, 1893

The strike took a violent turn after pastoralists (commonly referred to as squatters) refused to even meet with the workers. On the 2nd of September, a squatter’s woolshed at Dagworth Station was burned down before it could be used by scab labour. One shearer, unionist Samuel Hoffmeister, was chased by a squatter and three policemen and found dead near a billabong the following day.

In August 1895, Banjo Patterson was riding through Dagworth Station on his journey to central-western Queensland. Inspired by the events of the previous year, he wrote ‘Waltzing Matilda’, widely considered an allegory of the 1894 Strike and Hoffmeister’s death.



The original manuscript c. 1895

The swagman of ‘Waltzing Matilda’ represents Hoffmeister, a worker in the bush who lacked basic rights – to vote, to arbitrate their wages and conditions, and protections at work. The billy boiling refers to Lawson’s earlier poem, Freedom on the Wallaby:

*“She’s going to light another fire
And boil another billy.”*

The jumbuck (a male sheep) signifies Australia’s pastoral industry, and the swagman’s claim to it **parallels the AWU’s demand for fair wages and conditions and ongoing strike action in 1894.**

However, a squatter rides in, with three armed soldiers in tow, demanding the swagman return the jumbuck. Knowing there was no fair justice from the squatter, the swagman jumps into the billabong and drowns. The ghost of the swagman continues to call beyond his death for justice.

Though today ‘Waltzing Matilda’ may not be remembered for its political message or links to the union movement, its themes ring true – **Australian workers will never back down when fighting for what they’re owed.**



‘Down on his Luck’ by Frederick McCubbin (1889)

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