

AMWU

News

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union



AMWU

Spring 2019

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Paul Bastian
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Editorial

I'm very proud of the work our union does every day winning for our members. This edition is jam-packed with great wins we've had across industries from vehicle, to print, to food, to rail, trams, and lifts.

The most important win that will have huge consequences not just for our members, but for shift workers across the country, is the Mondelez (Cadbury) case. Natasha and Brendon, two AMWU members at Cadbury in Tasmania, exploded onto the national scene in February when we announced that they were being taken to the Federal Court by their employer, multinational Mondelez, in a dispute over personal leave.

Like many other shift workers around Australia, Natasha and Brendon work ordinary hours of 12-hour days. Under the National Employment Standards, workers are entitled to ten sick days of personal leave. Mondelez was trying to short-change their workers, arguing that despite working 12-hour days, Natasha and Brendon could only have 76 hours of personal leave a year, instead of 120 hours to cover ten sick 12-hour days. Natasha and Brendon won their case, which sets a precedent for shift workers all over the country. You can read the full details of the case on page five.

We also had our first National Conference under the New Union Rules adopted in 2018. National Conference, which meets every two years and has a majority of rank and file members, is the highest governing body within our union.

I'd like to acknowledge all of the rank and file members who attended and contributed to the success of the Conference. You can read my report on page ten for more information on what happened at Conference.

Of course, while our organisers, officials, and delegates are out there delivering for our members every day, the Morrison Liberal Government remains determined to attack unions and working people.

There are some alarming pieces of legislation currently before the Parliament. The misleadingly named Ensuring Integrity Bill would allow regulators, employers and the Federal Government a new and unprecedented capacity to interfere with the running of our union. We've written a handy summary for you on page seven that breaks down all the jargon and explains what this Bill really means and why it's bad for workers. We'll be working hard to get the key cross-benchers in the Senate to support us by voting against this Bill, and I encourage you to get involved in the campaign – you can stay up to date with all the latest info by liking us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/TheAMWU>).

I hope you enjoy this edition.

In unity

Paul Bastian
AMWU National Secretary



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Nervous McCain says “don’t do it again”



Once bitten, twice shy vegetable processor McCain was facing the prospect of lengthy and damaging industrial action at its Ballarat facilities, but instead agreed to a new Enterprise Agreement that delivers improved conditions for workers.



Workers at McCain have secured a great deal for their new Enterprise Agreement

The food giant managed to drag negotiations out for nearly 18 months, but when workers started voting on a Protected Action Ballot management suddenly came back to the table with a more accommodating approach.

Workers at McCain in Ballarat took six weeks of industrial action in a bitter dispute in 2016. McCain tried to bring in strike breakers from interstate and New Zealand, but failed to

break the resolve of their local workforce. According to delegate Ross Kenna, this was one meal that McCain didn’t want to do again. “We’re a 40 year union site, with a really strong union culture,” Ross said.

“We stood firm with our industrial action in 2016 when we were confronted by some pretty ordinary tactics by company management.

“Solidarity moves mountains. We showed that we had the ability to draw the membership together and we were united.

“The strength we showed then was the exact reason why we didn’t have to go on strike in 2019.”

Organiser Angela McCarthy said the new agreement delivers an eight per cent pay rise over three years, but when improved conditions and allowances are factored in, workers will actually be ten per cent better off than they were under the previous Agreement.

Other important elements of the Agreement include:

- 120 hours of sick leave for 12-hour shift workers
- Five days family violence leave
- A review mechanism to make sure areas are not left under-staffed
- Restrictions on the use of labour hire.

Ross Kenna said the Enterprise Agreement result was possible due to a huge team effort.

“We are really thankful for the support of both the members and the unions, especially our organiser, Angela.

“We were also really well supported by the public - it’s not just the organiser and the delegates, it’s the entire community that makes these things happen, and lays the foundation for the success we had.” ●

Sweetest victory: Mondelez workers secure permanency

After more than seven years on rolling temporary contracts, Prue Green has finally gained a permanent position at the Mondelez factory in Scorebsy.

Prue and four other workers have achieved permanency after AMWU delegate Hubert Hassett raised their plight with local management.

Hubert said company management had used all manner of reasons to avoid putting workers onto full-time contracts, but the situation became farcical when Prue and one of her colleagues qualified for Long Service Leave.

“Due to changes in production requirements and automation in the manufacturing industry, the company process was not converting any contract employees to permanent,” Hubert said.

“This process has been ongoing for many years, but when Prue and another colleague qualified for Long Service Leave and received five years ‘Meritorious Service’ awards from the company, it became ridiculous.

“So we approached management again and discussed the need to review the contracts.”

Hubert said he had personal experience of working both as a labour hire employee and contract worker.

With his experience, he empathises with people in these situations. He strongly believes in being a voice for them, as he said, not having a secure permanent position after so many years serving an organisation can feel degrading.

For Prue, having a full-time position has taken a huge weight off her shoulders.

“Even after four months, every now and again I’ll wake up and I’ll think, ‘Oh wow. I’ve got a permanent full-time job’,” she said.

“There used to be that sense of uncertainty whenever you heard rumours about cutbacks, because you think, ‘I’m going to be one of the first to go,’ or ‘I’ll have to go back to being a casual’.

“So I feel more confident from that sense of security, and a lot happier.”

With so much experience behind her, Prue is versatile and skilled enough to work right across the factory – on the moguls, which make jellied sweets, and on the chocolate lines.

Locking in her job security though, is probably her most satisfying achievement.

“This has just been an unbelievable sort of experience, and a real journey. I just so appreciate it because of where I’ve come from,” Prue said. ●



AMWU member Prue is relieved to have finally been made permanent.



Huge win for shift workers in Federal Court case



Two courageous Tasmanians have defeated the combined power of multinational corporation Mondelez, the Australian Industry Group and the Federal Government in a high-stakes legal battle over the rights of shift workers.

Natasha Tewson and Brendon McCormack were shocked last year when their employer, Cadbury (owned by Mondelez) took them, and the AMWU, to the Fair Work Commission as a test case to cut the amount of personal and carer’s leave that shift workers are entitled to.

Australia’s National Employment Standards (NES) state that workers are entitled to a minimum of ten days paid personal leave per year. Cadbury employees work 12-hour shifts, so simple mathematics says that ten times a 12-hour day equals 120 hours of leave.

The mathematically-challenged multinational, however, argued that workers should only receive 76 hours of personal leave under the NES, based on ten times the standard working day of 7.6 hours.

On the surface, the company’s argument looked weak at best, and that was how the Fair Work Commission initially saw it. But when Mondelez appealed to the Federal Court, secured the backing of the nation’s peak industry body, and even the support of the Federal Government (which also lawyered up for the case), it became a David and Goliath struggle to defend the leave entitlements of shift workers across the country.

On August 22 the Federal Court decision came down – upholding the original decision in favour of the workers.

“Shift workers around Australia can breathe a sigh of relief today thanks to AMWU members Natasha and Brendon who stood up against Mondelez and won this case”, said Tasmania State Secretary, John Short.

“This was an appalling attempt by a very profitable multinational company to rob its workers of the leave that they are entitled to.

“It’s outrageous that a multinational like Mondelez would come in and try to undercut those minimum standards for some of the hardest working, lowest paid employees in this country.

“If you need to take a sick day, you should be paid for your normal hours of work, it’s as simple as that.”

For both Natasha Tewson and Brendon McCormack, the Federal Court decision was a happy end to a stressful journey.

“We’re just pretty pumped that we got the win,” Brendon said.

“But it’s not all about us, it’s about

everyone who does shift work, all the people who put in long bloody hours to support their families.”

Brendon McCormack said the news was not only creating excitement on the shop floor, it also gave people a real sense of what can be achieved with the support of your colleagues and your union.

“People who don’t understand trade unions often ask ‘what does the union do for us?’.

“Well, as one of our fellow members said to me yesterday, ‘this is what they do for us’.

“They help us to win better pay and conditions, and they defend us when we’re under attack.” ●



Brendon and Natasha, pictured outside their workplace in Tasmania, stood up for the rights of shift workers across Australia, and they won!

“We’re just pretty pumped that we got the win,” Brendon said.

“But it’s not all about us, it’s about everyone who does shift work, all the people who put in long bloody hours to support their families.”

PAY RISE TO KEEP THE WHEELS GOING ROUND AND ROUND

The wheels of CDC Victoria Buses will continue to go round and round after mechanics accepted wage increases of between 20 and 24 per cent over four years in their latest Enterprise Agreement.

The deal means CDC Victoria mechanics have been brought up to pay rates that are consistent with the other major bus operators in the state, including Ventura and Transdev.

Organiser Vince Pepi said strong union density and the company's need to retain skilled staff were critical to achieving the substantial pay rise.

"The company tried to argue against a pay rise in the first EA we negotiated with them," Vince said.

"But the reality is that diesel mechanics are in high demand, so eventually the company realised they had to catch up to the industry standard if they wanted to attract new staff and keep the ones they've already got."

CDC Victoria has been on a steady growth trajectory since entering the market in 2009 through

the purchase of Keffords Bus Lines, which operated services such as Westrans, Easttrans, Benders Bus Lines, Davis Group and Driver Group.

Since then Victorian bus companies have been merging like traffic on the Calder Freeway, with smaller family-owned businesses being swallowed up by larger players. In 2018, CDC picked up Tullamarine Bus Lines, forming an expanded company with over 500 buses and depots in Geelong, Ballarat, Oakleigh, Sunshine, Tullamarine and Wyndham.

The new Enterprise Agreement for the expanded company covers around 70 workers and was



Workers at CDC Victoria Buses are happy with their newly negotiated Enterprise Agreement.

endorsed overwhelmingly by members.

Vince Pepi said the agreement also delivered on a number of important allowances and conditions.

"We have improved the on-call breakdown money, secured two days paid domestic violence leave, and achieved top-up payments for maternity and parental leave," Vince said.

"The top up for parental leave is quite attractive for the guys, as it means they can continue to get their normal level of pay while they're caring for a new baby." ●

Pay rises to start flowing at Dry Creek

A twelve year pay drought has well and truly broken at Toll's Dry Creek depot in South Australia, with workers nailing down an 11.42 per cent increase to base pay in their new Enterprise Agreement.

With their previous agreement having expired way back in 2007, diesel mechanics at the workshop were getting sick of the status quo - but without union representation they were not getting anywhere with Toll's interstate management.

Organiser Nicole Coppock said the turning point came when a new employee (who had seen the AMWU in action at another workplace) suggested contacting the union and things began to snowball from there.

"As we got on board and we reached out to the company, we simply didn't allow them to ignore us," Nicole said.



Toll delegates (L-R) Adriaan Janse Van Rensburg, Ben Johnson, and Elliot Newton with AMWU organiser Nicole Coppock.

The strength of a united workforce became a crucial factor in the negotiations.

A key point of contention was Toll's proposal for new workplace rosters, which involved twelve-hour shifts.

Workers were initially determined to reject the long shifts - so much so that they voted 100 per cent in favour of taking industrial action in a Protected Action Ballot.

But with strike action looming, Toll came back with a significantly improved offer on pay.

"Toll had already agreed to the 11.42 per cent increase to their base pay, but to get the new roster arrangement across the line, Toll offered a new 'common hourly rate' on top of that, which will come into effect once the new rostering arrangements do.

"The members considered the revised offer and decided that the increased pay was too good to turn down," Nicole said.

"The guys started seeing some progress, and that's when they began to realise the benefits of having the AMWU in there fighting for them.

"In the end, all employees at the workshop joined the union. That was not only the diesel mechanics, but also all of the apprentices and storemen as well."

Legal Weapons: Bill gives bosses new powers to go after unions.

The Morrison Government has launched a new attack on the rights of workers, introducing legislation that will give bosses, regulators and the government unprecedented powers to interfere in the affairs of trade unions.

UNFAIR INTERFERENCE

The so-called Ensuring Integrity (EI) Bill has nothing to do with integrity, and everything to do with stopping unions from doing their job by tying them up in unnecessary and expensive court-room battles.

The Liberals argue that those who obey the law have nothing to fear, but unions have always broken bad laws to protect workers and the community.

Unions broke the law when members took strike action to win the rights so many Australians now take for granted. We broke the law when we went on strike to win the 38 hour working week, annual leave, the minimum wage, equal pay and superannuation. We broke the law when our members went on strike to stop John Howard abolishing Medicare.

But the fact is that these laws will affect our union even if we never break a law again. This Bill gives big businesses and politicians the power to shut down unions they don't like.

We're looking for your help to make sure this bad law does not get through the Senate.

So what are the key elements of this Bill, and how will they affect workers?

The Bill allows for political, corporate and judicial interference in what should otherwise be the free and democratic internal functioning of organisations.

It would allow the Industrial Relations Minister, the Registered Organisations Commission, or anyone with a 'sufficient interest' - which could include an employer, a rival in a leadership ballot, or a business lobby group, among others - the power to apply to the Federal Court for a wide range of orders.

The orders include disqualification of an officer, deregistering of a union, altering a union's eligibility rules, restricting the use of funds or property of a union, and more.

Under these rules, a union official may be investigating a business for failing to provide a safe workplace or failing to pay workers their legal entitlements. A technical breach, such as not submitting the right notice when entering a worksite, could be enough for that employer to run to the court to have that union official disqualified.

The Bill would also allow the Federal Court to disqualify a person from holding office in a union on a wide range of grounds, including that they are not a 'fit and proper person'.

This could lead to situations where, for example, a union official is barred from their position on the basis of minor traffic offences.

AMALGAMATIONS

The Bill also imposes a 'public interest test' on amalgamations of organisations which takes the right to choose away from members. Under this measure, amalgamations can be blocked by the Fair Work Commission if this 'test' is not met.

The Government, lobby groups and even big businesses themselves can seek to block a union amalgamation, even if it is freely supported by the members. In effect, this Bill creates a 'big business test', giving big business a say on which unions can amalgamate.

UNEVEN PLAYING FIELD

Contrary to the Government's claims, the requirements imposed by the Bill go much further than the requirements on corporations.

For example, while companies will be able to seek to have union officials disqualified and unions deregistered, there is no capacity for unions to seek to have a director disqualified or a company wound up when a corporation has engaged in wage theft or has recklessly endangered the lives of its workers.

The Bill is clearly motivated by political objectives. Workers face big issues such as low wage growth, insecure work and high regional unemployment.

These should be the priorities of the Government, not these serious attacks on unions working to build a fairer society. ●

UNION WIN

UNION WIN

Fighting for their rights: O-I Glass workers dig in



Workers at O-I Glass in Queensland and Victoria are digging in as their dispute with the global glass manufacturer deepens.

O-I earned a massive \$2.62 billion in revenue in Australia between 2013 and 2017, but still doesn't pay any tax in Australia. And now it's trying to undermine the pay and conditions of its workforce.

At the time of writing, workers in Victoria were into their 19th straight week of industrial action. Delegate Brett Templeton said workers had been making huge personal sacrifices to defend their hard won conditions.

"We've either been working day-on, day-off over a seven day period, or we've been applying partial work bans.

"On top of that, we have taken some extra four-hour stoppages to hold rallies outside the company's head office and community barbecues.

"No one's had a full week's pay since we started, and we're losing 57 per cent of our wage when we're doing the partial work bans."

Brett said O-I workers have put up with pay rises that were no better than (or below) inflation for the past seven years, so pay is a significant issue in the dispute.

"We're asking for four per cent, so we're really just after something that's a bit more meaningful than CPI," Brett said.

"From there it's really about securing what we've got. The company is consistently trying to find ways to weasel out of our hard-won conditions.

"For example, in our last agreement three years ago, we put in what we thought was a pretty robust clause around the use of contractors and labour hire. But the company has found a loophole which allows them to bring in contractors on lower wages and conditions."

O-I's Victorian site, in the inner-western suburb of Spotswood, is one of the oldest-running glass plants in the country, and one that has an illustrious union history. In 1996 workers at Spotswood were locked out by their employer (then ACI) following a dispute over plans to sack almost half of the plant's maintenance workforce.

"This site here is famous for its solidarity and unity, and we're always the first to put our hands in our pockets when someone else needs help," Brett said.

"We've always stuck together 100 per cent. We even had a community barbeque here where a few guys from that lock-out that haven't worked here since 1996 came up just to support us."

Meanwhile up in Queensland, workers at O-I's South Brisbane plant are also showing the power of a unified workforce.

Organiser Steve Franklin said members emphatically voted down the company's substandard proposed agreement, with a 97 per cent turn out and a 100 per cent NO vote.

"Members have been stopping work for three hours a day, one hour at a time, across different shifts, and picketing right outside the management offices," Steve said.



Clockwise from left: there has been a weekly picket running outside the OI Spotswood plant in Melbourne; Queensland OI members vote no; rally outside OI's Melbourne headquarters; Queensland OI members have been taking to the streets for a fair agreement.

"The guys are out in the street waving the flags and are getting lots of support from traffic going past."

Speaking from the picket, delegate Adam Davis said workers were determined to get a result.

"We're going to be here until the company shows some reason and comes to the table, and starts putting our existing conditions into the EBA, as we deserve." ●

Back on track: Maryborough workshops stay staunch and look to the future

After ten days of industrial action and months of negotiations, workers at Downer EDI in Maryborough, Queensland, have voted up a new agreement that delivers a pay rise of nine per cent over three years and retains all existing conditions.

The hard-fought agreement comes after workers ran a massive campaign to secure the future of the state's rail manufacturing sector, culminating in the Paluszczuk Government's landmark commitment to building all future rolling stock and associated infrastructure in Queensland.

AMWU delegate Peter Killeen said Downer EDI initially tried to play hard-ball by pushing to remove important conditions, and offering only a token wage rise.

Workers were determined to get a fair deal however, and a mass meeting of over 300 union members voted unanimously to undertake a series of work stoppages over ten days to put pressure back on the company.

"We've got nearly 100 per cent union membership in the workshops, and the lads were staunch all the way though," Peter said.

"The company tried to pretend that the actions weren't hurting them, but we knew they were. "At the start they said 'no, it's out of the question, it's not happening', but after a few days out everything changed.

"They came back and said 'look, we want to sit down and talk, it's got to be resolved today.'

"In the end we were prepared to go longer if we had to, but we were able to roll over existing conditions and lock-in a fair pay rise too.

"And having got through this tough negotiation, it puts us in a strong position to fight for a better outcome on pay and conditions next time."

Just a few years ago the Maryborough facility was under a cloud, and facing the prospect of closure.



Downer EDI workers in Queensland took industrial action to secure a fair Agreement.

"Back in 2015 they were shutting the joint, no ifs or buts," Peter said. "But workers and the local community got together, we held rallies and took our campaign up to politicians.

"Now under the new Queensland Government's procurement policy, any new trains for Queensland will be built in Maryborough.

"We're confident there's a good solid five to ten years' work ahead, at a minimum, and there's talk that by this time next year we'll have an extra 100 employees." AMWU State Secretary Rohan Webb paid tribute to the determination of members of all unions at the Maryborough workshops.

"This great outcome could not have been achieved without the hard work and commitment of hundreds of AMWU, ETU and CFMEU delegates and members at this facility," Rohan said.

"All they're asking for is fairness." ●

Going up: lift technicians secure better pay

Lift technicians in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory have seen their pay go up after securing new deals with some of the biggest players in the industry.

Workers at Otis in NSW have agreed to a new deal which delivers a 19.4 per cent pay rise compounded over four years, including a five per cent increase over two increments in the first year.

Other key aspects of the Otis agreement include a three per cent annual increase to all allowances, and penalty rates being written into the agreement.

At Schindler in NSW, workers have secured an outstanding 17 per cent increase to their wages over three years, and a three per cent increase to allowances each year.

And workers at Liftronic in Queensland and the Northern Territory have also inked a new agreement - delivering a 12 per cent wage increase over three years, an additional one per cent superannuation contribution, double



AMWU and ETU members at Schindler voted up an agreement with a 17 per cent wage increase.

time on Saturdays with a four-hour minimum, a multi-story allowance, and improved conditions (including a call-out clause).

NSW Organiser Fergal Eiffe said the bargaining process at Otis and Schindler had also led to greater solidarity between workers, with union density at both sites increasing by 25 per cent. This solidarity proved to be extremely important during negotiations.

Otis members took a 24-hour stoppage and an indefinite ban on overtime - and within a week the company came back with the new improved offer.

Meanwhile, members at Schindler considered undertaking a Protected Action Ballot, but ultimately the ballot was not needed as the employer improved its offer.

Furthermore, both employers knew that if they failed to meet industry-standard pay and conditions, they would risk losing their skilled staff.

"The nature of the lift industry is that most of the technicians know each other.



Liftronic workers in Queensland and the NT locked in pay rises of 12 per cent over three years.

"They also know which companies are paying well, and which ones aren't," Fergal said.

Fergal said the AMWU and ETU were also working together to bring other smaller employers into industry-wide agreements.

"We've got a very good working relationship between the two unions," Fergal said. ●



National Conference Wrap

Special Report by Paul Bastian

In August we held our first National Conference under our New Union Rules, with one, united membership.

Under the new Rules, rank and file members make up the majority of conference delegates, and it was fantastic to see so many passionate and articulate members from around the country take to the floor throughout Conference. I was particularly pleased to see so many women and young people stepping up and having their say over the two days – it can be pretty intimidating to get up and speak in front of a room of 100 of your peers and union officials, but everyone who did so was an absolute credit to the union.

We heard reports from rank and file leaders of each of our seven National Industry Committees – Rail, Shipbuilding, Defence and Aerospace, Automotive and Transport, Food, Print and Packaging, and Engineering and Mining Services, as well as our National Women's Committee. They gave delegates an insight into the breadth of the members we represent, and the challenges and opportunities facing each of our industries. These delegates made it clear that we've got a plan to grow in our industries, deliver for our members, and take it up to the bosses. Hearing from them was a real highlight.

We also heard from some great guest speakers – Sally McManus, ACTU Secretary; Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition; Bill Newson, Secretary of our sister union in New Zealand, E TU; and Jim Stanford, economist and Director of The Centre for Future Work. Our delegates weren't afraid to ask the big questions about our jobs and our industries, getting to the heart of the issues that saw the re-election of the Morrison Government,



Delegates and observers at the 2019 AMWU National Conference.

and putting the hard word on Albo about Labor's industrial relations and trade policies.

As the governing body of our union, Conference also had to consider matters like budgets and rules. I'm proud that the New Union Budget Rule has been approved – the last formal piece in the New Union project. This will give us greater capacity to target our resources where they're needed and will be crucial to our ability to organise and grow into the future.

We had great resolutions on labour hire, industrial manslaughter, workplace health and safety, TAFE and training, women in trades, and much more. It was clear there is no shortage of ideas and passion

for making Australia a better place for workers across our union.

And of course, it was great to hear from our State Secretaries, who are doing the hard yards supporting our industry committees and working with delegates each and every day to grow and strengthen our union.

In short, it was a great first Conference for the New Union project and I'm looking forward to working with the new, member-led, National Council between now and the next Conference in 2021. ●

YARRA TRAMS WORKERS NEGOTIATE A SHORTER WORKING WEEK

A landmark agreement between unions and Yarra Trams has delivered a shorter working week with no loss of pay for maintenance workers.

From 1 July, 2020, Yarra Trams maintenance workers will have a 36-hour week – down from 38 hours under the previous Enterprise Agreement.

Yarra Trams delegate Gus Leon said that workers have been trying to achieve a reduction in working hours for several years.

"When I started work we had a 40-hour week," Gus said. "We went down to 38, and then we started to push for 36."

"We talked about it in the last round of EBA negotiations, but really got nowhere because management kept saying that it was not cost effective."

"This time around we went in with a more focused set of claims, and we were prepared to sit down and work through those claims sensibly with the company."



AMWU, RTBU, and ETU members came together to secure a shorter working week at Yarra Trams.

"Together we showed that we were genuine about what we wanted, and I think this time they had no choice."

AMWU organiser Chris Spindler said the union negotiating team and company management both recognised that existing rostering arrangements needed to be overhauled.

This allowed negotiators to have a productive conversation about how things could be done better.

"The final package also empowers workers to decide their own rosters – as long as they're consistent with a set of agreed guidelines," Chris said. "Previously the company could insist on a roster with just six weeks' notice, but under the new EA, a workers' committee will decide on three

rosters which will be submitted to the company.

"If the roster meets the guidelines it is put to a vote of the shop floor for adoption, and a trial period will then be put in place."

"As long as employees are involved in the process, they will be able to control the roster system."

"This victory for workers highlights the changing nature of work and how it impacts on workers' lives, and the need for workplaces to be flexible in establishing work/life balance for their most important assets: their workers."

Gus Leon said the 36-hour week was all about reducing fatigue and having a better work-life balance.

"Because we were able to negotiate a reduction in hours without losing any pay, it means that our hourly rates have actually gone up. What's more, in the future, we'll be able to negotiate pay rises based on the shorter working week, because we've locked that in now." ●

In the can: VIP Packaging workers seal the deal in record time

Enterprise Agreement negotiations at VIP Packaging in Brisbane have wrapped up and a new deal in is the can.

With a clear log of claims, a willingness to bargain in good faith, and a united workforce behind them, the negotiating team was able to pull it all together in record time.

In fact, it took less than two days of negotiations to reach the proposed agreement, which was then endorsed by around 75 per cent of members.

Key elements of the agreement include:

- A 10.8% wage increase over four years
- Three new permanent positions and one new apprentice position
- Improved meal break, hot day, labour hire and consultation provisions
- Family and Domestic Violence leave entitlements.

Delegate Leon Christensen said another important victory for workers was retaining their existing redundancy clause.

"The company tries to cap our redundancy entitlements every time," Leon said.

"Other sites have actually traded it off, but ours is uncapped and it's a good clause."

Organiser Scott Stanford said the provisions around casuals and labour hire were also a significant win, and would provide a clearer pathway to permanency.

"The agreement provides permanent positions for three of the current group who are employed under labour hire arrangements," Scott said.

"There will also be an annual review of temporary labour hire, which will take place



every February, to look at the potential for permanent roles for those workers."

Scott Stanford congratulated AMWU members at the Brisbane site for establishing a strong culture of collectivism in the workplace.

"I think the outcome of this negotiation just speaks volumes about the benefits of long-term union membership, because workers have been able to recognise and maintain good conditions well in advance of the award," Scott said.

Leon Christensen also paid tribute to the high level of unity among the members.

"This has been a union shop for many years and when it comes to the crunch, everyone sticks together," he said. ●

IN BRIEF

LOCAL LITHIUM, LOCAL JOBS



Workers and the local community in South West Western Australia have banded together to demand a greater share of the jobs created by the construction of US-based lithium giant Albermarle's \$1 billion lithium hydroxide conversion plant.

The first sods have been turned on the new project at Bunbury's Kemerton Strategic Industrial Estate, but despite promises from Albermarle bosses, local business have been missing out on much of the early construction work.

With growing concern over unemployment in the region, the AMWU has stepped up to coordinate a community campaign to ensure local workers are given priority for local jobs.

AMWU WA State Secretary Steve McCartney talks to the media at a community protest.

The campaign kicked off with a community meeting in the Bunbury suburb of Eaton in early July. A rally was also held on Saturday 24 August outside the WA State Labor Conference in Perth.

"At the moment it is looking like 70 per cent of workers on the project are coming from outside the area," WA State Secretary Steve McCartney said.

"We've got 457 visa workers, we've got people from Perth, we've got people from the eastern states all lined up to work on this job."

"This is far from the commitment to local jobs that the company made." ●

Bauer steps up in South Australia

Peter Bauer has taken the reins as State Secretary of the South Australian Branch.

Peter, who has been involved in the AMWU as an Organiser and Official since 1989, says he is excited about the Branch's future.

"Our Branch has a wonderful history, playing a central role in the life of South Australian workers," Peter said.

"Looking ahead there are some real opportunities for us to make a difference in growth industries like naval shipbuilding, with projects such as the Future Frigates and Future Submarines coming on-line over the next few years."

"Outside of the Defence industries, I look forward to ensuring our print, vehicle, food and manufacturing industry members are a key part of our State's economic future and we will work hard to ensure growth and prosperity in these industries."

"The role of our delegates will be critical to our success. We'll stand with and help them support their colleagues at work."

Peter Bauer said the Branch was also making important structural changes and building a more



New AMWU South Australia State Secretary Peter Bauer is looking forward to building a bright future for South Australian workers.

united union consistent with the New Union Project.

"I'm really looking forward to working with our members to take our union forward over the next four years," Peter said.

Meanwhile, outgoing Secretary John Camillo has been recognised for his enormous contribution to the AMWU over 40 years, including an incredible 19 years at the helm of the South Australian Branch.

"John made a real difference to the lives of South Australian workers and he can be proud of all that he has done for the members of the AMWU and the Vehicle Builders' Union before that, at both a state and national level," said National Secretary, Paul Bastian.

John will receive an AMWU Gold Award of Merit in recognition of his contributions to the union. ●

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DELEGATE PROFILE

Sue Creed

Giving it a try: Sue Creed looks back on 37 years of union activism.

It was 1990. Sue Creed was working at the Simplot vegetable processing factory in Spreyton, just south of Devonport in Tasmania. And she was getting frustrated.

"I worked on the shift that didn't have any delegates and I knew that there were things that were happening which just weren't right," Sue says.

"But nothing was being done about it because we didn't have anyone standing up for us on the shop floor."

A few months later, Sue was at a mass meeting when the call went out for more members to take on the role of workplace delegate.

"To be honest, I didn't put my hand up," Sue admits. "I just got pushed forward by a few of the people from work who thought I'd be good at it.

"From there, I just said, 'I'll give it a try'. I didn't expect it to last for 28 years and I didn't expect it to be as involved and as entertaining and as personality-building as it has been."

In fact, Sue's journey as a trade unionist was just getting started. Not only did she become a long-term delegate, Sue also spent 27 years on the Tasmanian State Council (1992-2019) and five years on the National Council (2012-2017). Her contribution to the AMWU was recently recognised when she was presented with an AMWU Award of Merit at the Tasmanian State Conference dinner.

Sue says she never considered herself to be a trailblazer, but others may disagree. She certainly never shied away from a challenge.

"One of our greatest achievements at Simplot was when the union arranged for workers to become qualified with a certificate and advanced certificate of food technology," Sue says.

"I was lucky to be one of the 30 or so people who were picked to do that particular certificate, and the only person who was actually straight off the shop floor."

"The union managed to convince the manager at the time that training would give formal recognition to the practical skills that workers had and it was a big deal at the time."

Sue has also seen significant changes in the vegetable processing industry over the past few decades, as competition from cheaper imported products put serious pressure on domestic suppliers. More recently, however, the Tasmanian industry has had something of a resurgence, and the future is now looking more secure.

"I think people now realise that Australian vegetables are better than the imported stuff," Sue says.

"The big supermarkets could see that their customers were complaining about the quality of the product and the risk of food poisoning, and they wanted to buy Australian."


While the expectation of quality gives local producers a competitive advantage, it also means they have to deliver on that expectation.

Sue says this is why it is in the best interest of companies like Simplot to work constructively with trade unions to provide better workplaces, and to ensure workers receive high-quality training - particularly in areas like food safety.

While no longer working at Simplot, Sue is not slowing down. "I've had a busier time since I retired, I think, than when I was working," she says.

She's currently getting ready for a family holiday to Canada and Alaska - a well-earned reward for a lifetime of helping others and fighting for workers' rights. ●





Worried about something?

- Are you losing interest in work?
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