

AMWU

# News

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union



AMWU

Winter 2020

# A new beginning

**Build Australian. Buy Australian. Own Australian.**



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# Editorial

**At the time of writing, it seems that the worst of the COVID-19 health crisis is behind us in Australia. On page six, you can read about some of the AMWU members who were essential in ensuring Australians had access to ventilators, masks, canned food, and toilet paper throughout the pandemic.**

Organisers and officials have been kept busy dealing with bosses who thought COVID-19 gave them a free pass on abiding by the law. At Komatsu in WA, older workers were discriminated against and sent home without pay until AMWU members contacted the union and got the situation sorted out. You can read about that on page nine.

And of course, a pandemic hasn't stopped us from doing all our usual work to support members. The AMWU secured thousands of dollars in back pay for a member in South Australia who was being paid at the wrong classification, and thousands of dollars' worth of missing entitlements for a member in New South Wales. In Queensland, the AMWU won a landmark case against BHP and their in-house labour-hire company, with the Fair Work Commission throwing out two enterprise agreements that were creating a two-tier workforce. And nationally a long running effort to get helicopter aircrew covered by the Air Pilots Award has paid off. You can read about all of these stories and more inside.

While the health crisis is winding down in Australia, the economic effects of this global crisis will continue to be felt for some time. The question is "how long and how bad will it be?" That largely depends on how governments respond. Stopping JobKeeper - the wage subsidy that has kept a roof over many workers' heads throughout this crisis - abruptly in September would be disastrous, as would returning JobSeeker to its pre-crisis poverty levels. Our union will continue campaigning on both of these issues.



Manufacturing can and should be a key part of our economic recovery. This crisis has shown the importance of maintaining and growing our industry, our skills, and our sovereign capability. You can read more about the AMWU plan to rebuild Australian manufacturing on page four.

The Prime Minister has talked a big game on the importance of Australian manufacturing, but our industry needs more than just talk. We need to fill our factories with work by bringing forward infrastructure projects with maximum local content. We need government investment in our industry and we need the government to lead by example and buy Australian. We will be campaigning hard on this in the months to come. We cannot let a return to normal mean a return to business as usual when it comes to offshoring our manufacturing jobs.

In unity

**Paul Bastian**  
AMWU National Secretary

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### AMWU News Winter 2020

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Please contact your union organiser for updates. © AMWU National Office.

# A new beginning

**The economic carnage wreaked by the COVID-19 crisis has affected millions of Australians.**

**The immediate focus of the AMWU throughout the crisis has been on protecting the health, welfare and jobs of members.**



At the time of writing, the health crisis seems to be largely under control, with the number of new cases declining and restrictions gradually being wound back across the country. Our national dialogue is now turning to the question of 'what comes next' for the Australian economy.

COVID-19 has exposed the cracks in our economy and our industrial relations system that we have been warning of for years. The dangers of offshoring our manufacturing industry and relying on long international supply chains have become clear. The risk of a narrow economy concentrated in just a few trade-exposed sectors is evident.

**"Changing government policy to spend our money on Australian jobs should not just be a crisis measure."**

And the problems with casualising the workforce, leaving a third of workers without access to paid sick leave, are now obvious.

When we talk about what comes next, we must address these issues. We must build back better.



This crisis is our chance to regain our economic sovereignty. We can be a country that's integrated in the global economy, but still has the capability to

support itself when global supply chains break down. And we should be a country that treats its workers with dignity and respect.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison

and Industry Minister Karen Andrews have both been talking up the importance of Australian manufacturing, but revitalising an industry that has been hollowed out by decades of neglect is going to require more than just talk. This is the AMWU's three point plan to rebuild our manufacturing industry.

## Build Australian

First of all, we need to fill our factories and get people back to work.

The manufacturing industry is experiencing the toughest conditions since the GFC. Forward orders have



fallen off a cliff. We need projects that jump start our economy to fill our factories with work and create jobs.

All tiers of government need to have a list of infrastructure projects and initiatives that are set to go. All of these must have maximum local content requirements.

Australia's vast pool of retirement savings in the superannuation system should also be put to use to generate not only solid returns for investors but more jobs for Australian workers.



This can be achieved by delivering opportunities for those funds to invest in key projects like roads, rail and ports. Super funds could also be used for social infrastructure like low-cost, affordable and social housing, providing the returns meet the interest of members.



These projects will be key to jump starting the economy once the acute crisis has passed.

Finally, the Federal Government should take a hands on approach to industry policy to ensure that great Australian ideas can turn into high-skill, high-wage local jobs.

### Buy Australian

The next step is straightforward - it's about putting Australian jobs first and buying Australian made goods and services.

That would give our economy the boost it desperately needs right now and would revitalise manufacturing communities for the future.

Changing government policy to spend our money on Australian jobs should not just be a crisis measure.

We cannot return to the model of the last thirty years where the only concern for governments and consumers has been to secure the lowest-cost product.

State and Federal Governments must lead the way and drive a cultural



change so that Australian businesses and consumers seek out and prefer Australian made.

We must permanently change the way we all spend our money to reflect the value that buying Australian made goods creates in jobs, skills, and communities here at home.

### Own Australian

Finally, governments have to get over their aversion to having an ownership stake in businesses.

There will be companies and industries that face existential threats during this crisis, as we have already seen with the airline industry. As a country we cannot let entire

industries, and major companies with thousands of employees fail.

But any Government bailouts or loans should only be provided if the government receives equity in return.

This is the same model that the Obama administration used with the US



**"The Federal Government should take a hands on approach to industry policy to ensure that great Australian ideas can turn into high skill high wage jobs here in Australia."**

automotive industry during the GFC.

Taking an ownership stake would enable the Government to demand these bailouts are used to bring supply chains back into Australia, to improve the skills of Australian workers, and deliver local jobs - not golden handshakes for corporate executives. ●

# AMWU members rise to the occasion

## When the chips are down, you can depend on Australian workers to dig deep.

Across the country, workers have been pitching in to make sure Australians are kept safe and able to continue on with their lives - despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Manufacturing workers in particular have been working extra hours, learning new skills, and producing new products to meet the needs of our community.

"We are working so hard at the moment," said workplace delegate Ola Solaese.

"We've been running three shifts - morning, afternoon and night shift, but with groups starting and finishing at different times.

"Permanent workers from LSR (Liquid Silicone Rubber) have been moved up to work on ventilators, and casual workers have been brought in to work on LSR.

"It's very busy, and could be like this for a long time - but we'll continue to do the work."

We've been in discussions with the employer to see if we can find work opportunities for unemployed members as the production of masks ramps up."

## Food

When the prospect of a lengthy lockdown became real in the first few weeks of March, people across the country sought to make sure their pantry cupboards were stocked with plenty of tinned food.

Luckily for Australians, workers at SPC in Shepparton were on hand to make sure we wouldn't go hungry.

Workplace delegate at SPC Michael Cannon says that demand was running hot for anything that could be stored away, but the hottest items of all were tinned tomatoes, baked beans and spaghetti.

"With our process, a lot of our products are kept in the inventory until they're ready to go out, and then they are labelled later," Michael explained.

"But because of the demand we had to get product out the door quickly, so they stepped up work in the packaging section.

"In packaging, they ended up going from one shift per line to a couple of lines that were running 24 hours a day."

Michael Cannon said one of the most challenging aspects of the past few months for SPC workers was dealing with the uncertainty created by the spread of the coronavirus.

"It took a while to get processes in place that made people feel that it was safe to come to work. But once those processes were sorted out, and things like thermal imaging cameras were put in place, that made a big difference."

## Toilet Paper

Meanwhile in Queensland, workers at Queensland Tissue Products in Brisbane answered the national call for toilet paper by rolling out 150 tonnes of toilet paper a day - an increase in production of 30 per cent.

Queensland/NT Assistant State Secretary Danny Dougherty said workers at Queensland Tissue responded to the national run on toilet paper with quiet determination.

"They just got in and did the work in a safe and professional manner," Danny said.

"Members were prepared to work some extra hours and to increase productivity on the factory floor.

"It's a great reflection on the workers, and also on the site delegate, JR, who was vigilant in making sure that health and safety wasn't compromised." ●



From high-tech medical equipment to face masks, baked beans and toilet paper, AMWU members have had it covered.

## Medical Equipment

Respirators have been one of the most important pieces of medical equipment in the fight against COVID-19 and, around the world, hospitals have been scrambling to access more of them.

ResMed - which was founded in Australia - focuses on products for people affected by sleep apnoea, but it is also regarded as one of the world's top producers of medical respirators as well as silicone masks for hospitals.

As COVID-19 started to spread, workers at ResMed's Bella Vista manufacturing facility in North West Sydney were in a race against time to make sure Australian hospitals were prepared for a major outbreak of the deadly disease.

## Face Masks

Face masks have been a crucial part of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) tool kit for millions of workers, especially in the health sector.

In South Australia, workers at packaging company Detmold will churn out 145 million surgical masks for the SA and Federal Governments.

The project will see Detmold employing up to 160 extra workers.

Organiser Kevin Ralph said it was great to see the work being done in South Australia.

"It makes sense to produce masks locally," Kevin said. "We have the materials, we have the skills, and we have the capabilities.

"Our domestic manufacturers are adaptable and able to retool quickly when needed.

"The first round of jobs were filled internally within the company.

# BHP's dodgy Operation Services Agreements thrown out

**Two dodgy Enterprise Agreements designed to attack the wages and conditions of workers at BHP mines have been thrown out by the Fair Work Commission (FWC).**

The Enterprise Agreements covered workers at BHP's in-house labour hire unit, Operation Services.

Queensland & Northern Territory State Secretary Rohan Webb said BHP should be employing its workers under existing union-negotiated agreements.

"Operation Services is creating a two-tier workforce within BHP on lesser wages and conditions," he said.

Despite the fact that the Agreements were intended to cover thousands of workers in Queensland, they were voted up by only a small number of non-union workers based in Western Australia.

The Production Agreement was approved by just 9 out of 16 employees, and the Maintenance Agreement approved by 37 out of 50 employees.

The Agreements locked in significantly worse pay and conditions for Operation Services employees, including:

- On average, around \$40,000 less pay than other coal agreements
- No pay rises over the agreement
- Workers could be transferred to any of the company's operations nationally, including coal and iron ore, at any location at any time



- No accident pay; and
- Workers could be forced to work on Christmas Day.

After the Agreements were approved by FWC Deputy Commissioner Gerard Boyce, unions launched an appeal against his decision.

The Full Bench of the FWC upheld the appeal and agreed with many of the AMWU's submissions against the certification of these Agreements.

Importantly, the Commission found that BHP had not sufficiently demonstrated that workers would be better off overall compared with the Award, or whether the Agreements conformed to the

National Employment Standards.

In a controversial development, it was revealed during the appeal that Deputy Commissioner Boyce had access to FWC modelling showing that workers would be no better off on the Agreement than under the Award.

Deputy Commissioner Boyce emailed the FWC's analysis to BHP executives - but did not provide it to unions. The BHP executives then responded by telling Mr Boyce the modelling was 'inaccurate', and he rubber-stamped the Agreement just 20 minutes later.

Interestingly, Deputy Commissioner Boyce is himself a former NSW manager with the Australian Mines and Metals Association - the peak body for mining companies including BHP.

Rohan Webb said that while the decision to overturn the Agreements was an important win for workers, there was still a long way to go.

"There are additional legal avenues still available to BHP, and the Fair Work Commission will need to rehear applications for approval of any agreements," he said.

"We will monitor the situation closely and keep members informed.

"This battle shows why workers must continue to build strength, density and power in their workplaces - so that we can win through negotiation first and not rely on winning in the courts later." ●

## Jack's backpay comes at just the right time

**With his employer standing down staff due to the coronavirus, Jack Lord was more than happy to receive over \$9,000 in backpay after discovering that he had been underpaid for around 18 months.**

A trade qualified printer in Adelaide, Jack was suspicious about the amount he was getting from his employer.

"I always thought that my pay seemed a bit low," said Jack.

"Then one day I looked over the award again and saw there were different levels to it - it wasn't just a base rate.

"After reading a bit more I thought, yeah, maybe I am being underpaid."

When he found out that a co-worker had also been paid at the wrong level, he contacted the AMWU for advice.

Jack put his concerns to his employer in writing - and when the employer failed to acknowledge the error, the AMWU stepped in on his behalf.

Organiser Kevin Ralph provided the employer with copies of Jack's trade certificate and job description and identified the relevant parts of the Graphic Arts, Printing and Publishing Award.

Despite initially being reluctant to engage, the employer eventually conceded that Jack should be getting paid at the higher rate. Kevin Ralph said underpayments were a problem in some smaller printing companies where there was no union presence.

"Print Organisers and Officials are looking at this issue nationally, and with a focus on organising smaller enterprises and making sure people are getting paid at the right classification," Kevin said.

Jack said he's only been a member of the AMWU for six months, but he's glad he joined.

"Everyone's been really helpful," he said. "I just felt like I had some back-up."

"If you've got any concerns about your pay, the best thing you can do is talk to your union. They've got all the answers." ●

# Kenworth keeps on trucking through the crisis

**It's not easy to practice social distancing when you're packed into a busy factory.**

For workers at Kenworth Trucks' Bayswater production facility in Melbourne, spreading out on the shopfloor has meant spreading out the work across the day with an extra shift.

The new shift arrangements were part of a range of measures put in place to ensure Kenworth could continue working during the coronavirus crisis. Site delegate Steve Kearney says



Image: Voss Photography

workers and company management cooperated to come up with a plan that enabled production to continue through the pandemic in a way that was safe for workers, while also getting the approval of Kenworth's North American parent company.

"I think Kenworth do need to be applauded for the way they've gone about everything," Steve said.

"For example, we suggested options like putting in place split shifts to halve the workforce on day and afternoons, and that has been put in place.

"They always kept running things by us and keeping us informed, in case we had any further input."

Steve Kearney said the plant has been reconfigured, workers have been supplied with extra Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and new processes have been put in place to enable social distancing.

"We have to wear face masks the whole time we're on site, glasses the whole time we're on site, gloves basically the whole time we're on site.

"There's no queuing in the canteen to get meals, because they're being pre-ordered.

"Every employee who enters has to have their temperature checked and, during the day, we'll get re-tested just in case someone has developed a fever during their shift.

"Our uniforms used to be washed once a week, now they're being washed twice a week. Everywhere you go there's hand sanitizer - absolutely everywhere. They've made temporary screens to separate workers that can be quickly and easily moved along the truck.

"We're no longer clocking in and clocking off - because the site uses fingerprint technology, and that doesn't fit with our new hygiene protocols.

"And workers aren't allowed in to start a new shift until everyone from the previous shift has left to avoid a crossover."

Developing the plan, and putting it in place, took around one month. During that time the plant was shut, but permanent workers continued to be paid.



AMWU delegate Steve Kearney was happy with how Kenworth Trucks responded to COVID-19.

"There was quite a cheer when we found out that we would be paid as normal and it wouldn't affect our leave or anything like that," Steve said.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Bayswater production facility was expanding, and set to ramp up production to ten trucks per day.

The facility employs around 270 permanent workers, assembling new trucks virtually from scratch.

"We do have a number of suppliers of major componentry," Steve says, "but they start at one end of the production line as a set of two folded chassis rails and we just start building them up and fitting everything to them."

The revised working arrangements have slowed production - but only marginally - with eight trucks now rolling off the assembly line every day.

AMWU Assistant National Secretary Dave Smith said workers and Kenworth's local management had found a sensible and safe way to keep production going, while still looking after workers during the period that production was suspended.

"This is what doing the right thing looks like," Dave said.

"Workplace health and safety has to be a priority but doing that during these unprecedented times should not come at the cost of workers being able to pay their bills." ●

# Komatsu workers get paid leave to stay safe

**Half a dozen AMWU members at Komatsu in Western Australia received a rude shock in the early days of the coronavirus outbreak when their employer sent them home on the grounds that they were 'vulnerable' to COVID-19.**

The workers, who were all 65 or older, were told to utilise the company's fifteen-day COVID-19 leave provision. But once that leave had expired, they would have to use their accrued personal leave and annual leave entitlements until the company deemed it safe for them to return to work.

Organiser Gary Carozzi initially wrote to Komatsu's local management seeking clarification of the policy.

"The directive just wasn't fair," Gary said.

"Frankly, it looked like the workers were being discriminated against because of their age.

"None of the workers had any symptoms of COVID-19, and most of them did not have a bank of accrued leave that they could draw down.

"Komatsu didn't qualify for the JobKeeper program, and as the workers had not been stood down they could not access JobSeeker payments either. "They were

very stressed and worried about how they were going to support themselves and their families."

When no response was received, the union escalated the matter to Komatsu's national management - and this time the plight of the Western Australian workers was taken seriously.

Komatsu's national headquarters confirmed in writing that workers who were deemed to be vulnerable due to age or a medical condition could access paid COVID-19 leave for as long as it took for the safety risk to pass.

Workers would not need to use their personal or annual leave entitlements, and any such

leave that had been used would be restored.

Gary Carozzi said the workers were 'pretty happy' with the result.

"This is a fantastic outcome and one of many reasons why it is important to be a member of the AMWU, to have a voice, and to have the support of your union in the workplace," he said.

Site delegate Gordon Entwistle also thanked Komatsu's national human resources officials Colin Shaw and Sally Hole, along with AMWU National Organiser Anne Donnellan, for getting the situation rectified quickly.

"Those three acted in a very professional way to reassure the workers," Gordon said. ●

## Chopper crews to get industrial safety net

**Helicopter Aircrew will finally have a strong industrial safety net with minimum conditions that recognise their unique skills following a union victory in the Fair Work Commission.**

The Fair Work Commission granted an AMWU claim to provide modern award coverage for employees who work as helicopter aircrew in the Air Pilots Award.

Workplace delegate at CHC in the Northern Territory Charles 'Chuck' McGregor-Shaw said aircrew perform dangerous and highly-skilled work.

"Aircrew operate on air ambulance contracts or search and rescue contracts around Australia," he said.

"Sometimes we'll be in the back as a winch operator, sometimes we'll go out on the winches and act as a rescue swimmer, or land as the rescue crew.

"Some of the larger aircraft have less visibility than others, so they need another set of eyes in the back to talk to the pilot and help get the aircraft down.

"We do observation and surveillance, like looking for a lost bush walker or somebody in the water.

"At other times we're up in the front left-hand seat, assisting the pilot with all sorts of roles - like navigation, communicating with emergency services on the ground, or operating forward-looking infra-red cameras and other surveillance equipment.

"So it's a multi-faceted role, and we're constantly multi-tasking."

Currently, the applicable award for aircrew is the Miscellaneous Award, which provides for very basic minimum entitlements.

The Air Pilots Award, however, is a strong modern award with many significant entitlements that are highly relevant to the work of helicopter aircrew.

These entitlements include accident pay, death and temporary/permanent disability insurance, and additional personal and annual leave benefits.

AMWU National Organiser Anne Donnellan said the AWMU's application was about ensuring helicopter aircrew had guaranteed conditions that reflected the difficult conditions they worked in.

"The significance of having a strong safety net is that when helicopter operators bargain with their employees for an enterprise agreement, that enterprise agreement needs to be more beneficial than the applicable award," she said.

"This gives workers a much more solid foundation when they go into bargaining for a new deal on their pay and conditions."

Charles McGregor-Shaw said the FWC decision to include aircrew in the Air Pilots Award was the culmination of a long campaign by workers.



"The union has been working on this quietly and doggedly for six years," he said.

"Initially we were trying to get a stand-alone award for aircrew, but this is a very good result for our industry and our trades.

"The AMWU team worked really hard to get this result." ●

# ProWeld workers go to the front of the queue

**Q: Who gets paid first when companies are struggling to pay their creditors?**

**A: Probably not workers - unless, of course, they have a strong union behind them.**

When things started to go pear-shaped at Western Australian company ProWeld, corporate creditors got paid first while around 40 workers were not getting paid at all.

All that changed, however, after the AMWU stepped in on behalf of its members. Suddenly union members went to the front of the queue.

The saga over unpaid wages at ProWeld is complicated but shows how workers are often the ones who get a dud deal when companies have disputes with each other.

ProWeld was sub-contracted by Aerison to perform work on a project for BHP at the Australian Marine Complex (AMC) in Western Australia.



When Aerison had a dispute over that project with BHP, it was not paid. Aerison subsequently failed to pay ProWeld, and ProWeld ended up in an \$8 million hole.

ProWeld management then laid off staff who went unpaid for the work they had been doing.

Delegate Phil 'River' Williams said workers got together and discussed what they could do to get the money they were owed. They then called in AMWU Organiser Simon Rushworth to act on their behalf.

Simon quickly entered discussions with the employer. And after some to-ing and fro-ing with management, the members were paid in full.

Phil said the involvement of the union was crucial in getting a positive outcome to the pay dispute.

"Of eleven workers at ProWeld, nine of them were members, so we had strength on the shop floor.

"We also had the power of the union behind us and the capacity to take them to court if we wanted to.

"Some of the other workers who were going it alone, and the sub-contractors, didn't get paid for another four weeks.

"So, we found that by sticking together, and being in the union, we got a better result." ●

# Union support helps Steve to secure his retirement

**A long-running dispute over unpaid entitlements for an AMWU member has been resolved with a healthy \$40,000-plus pay out from his employer.**

Steve\* is permanently incapacitated and no longer able to work, so the pay-out is a healthy foundation for his retirement.

For a long time, however, it looked like his entitlements may have vanished in a puff of smoke.

Steve had been paid by his employer on a salary continuance scheme for two years. When his salary continuance expired in January 2018 however, he was left in limbo.

He had 840 hours of long service leave owing and a whole lot of other accrued entitlements.

These entitlements were slowly depleted over the coming months. To make matters worse, 600-odd hours of his long service leave suddenly disappeared as well.

At that point, AMWU Organiser Michelle Parkin stepped in and took Steve's concerns to company management.

"I made it clear to the company that because Steve was permanently disabled, there was no prospect of him returning to work but he did want to resolve the issue of his missing entitlements.

"After several months of being stonewalled, we escalated our approach and raised the prospect of legal action.

"That seemed to jolt the company into action and they came back with an offer to terminate Steve's employment and restore his lost leave.

"We then went back and asked for five weeks pay in lieu of notice for his termination, which they accepted."

Michelle Parkin said having a union representative in your corner can make a huge difference when you're in dispute with a big, powerful company.

"It was a long-winded process, and very stressful for Steve and he was very happy to have his Union in his corner.

"When the situation was finally resolved, Steve was able to leave with all those worries taken off his shoulders - and a nice sum of money in his pocket." ●

\* For legal and privacy reasons we've referred to the member by his first name only and have chosen not to name the employer.

# Union merch flying off the shelves at Incat

## AMWU merch is flying off the shelves at Tasmanian shipbuilder Incat.

Workplace delegates at Incat including Paul Magrath, Paul Cingel, Dennis Webber and Matt Upston, along with dedicated union activist Adam Butterworth, have been working hard to make sure that members are supported in the workplace.

The team have also been making sure members are decked out in high-vis vests, jumpers and beanies.

The AMWU logo has been flying proudly – and it's given the union a visible presence on the worksite. But the merch is not just about keeping workers warm, it's also about reminding members that their workplace delegates are there to help.

Tasmanian State Secretary John Short says the union has been representing members on a range of different workplace matters.

"The delegates have been looking after quite a few individual issues, bringing them to the attention of the company," John said.

"Whether it's improving health and safety, cooperatively addressing the coronavirus risks, dealing with disciplinary issues, or just giving people advice, the delegates are trying to help and assist their fellow workers as much as possible."

John said Incat vessels were a tremendous advertisement for Tasmania's world-class shipbuilding sector, and for the high capabilities of Tasmanian workers.

Paul Magrath agrees. "I have so much pride in these boats that I've got one as the cover photo on my Facebook page," said Paul.

"They basically take 18 months to build, and I think we can get even better at them. The ferries certainly look the part – I don't see anything else on the water that looks quite like they do."

As with many businesses, COVID-19 has potentially thrown a spanner in the works, with the company suggesting it could lead to some uncertainty over orders for new vessels.



The scaffolding crew at Incat proudly showing off their new AMWU merch.

The AMWU and workplace delegates have been negotiating for a new Enterprise Agreement and will continue to argue to get the best possible outcome on wages and conditions for Incat workers, now and into the future. ●

## IN BRIEF

# A different kind of May Day

## It may have been a bit different, but workers across Australia and around the world overcame the restrictions of social distancing and isolation to celebrate May Day.

Using the power of social media, workers expressed their solidarity by taking selfies in their favourite union t-shirt and posting them online.

As more and more photos were posted, the hashtags #MayDay, #ProudToBeUnion, and

#UnionTShirtDay started trending across the country.

The campaign was a fun and innovative way to bring people together, and gave many people their first taste of trade union social media.

The origins of global May Day celebrations go back to the fight for an eight-hour day by stonemasons in Melbourne in 1856.

The courage of the stonemasons inspired similar campaigns around the world, including in the USA, where unions organised a national strike in support of an eight-hour day on 1 May 1896.

Since then, the international labour movement has marked 1 May as an occasion to celebrate the achievements of trade unions, and the struggles and sacrifices of unionists the world over.

Australian trade unions have established a long and colourful tradition of street marches, which sadly had to be suspended this year.

Have no doubt, May Day marches will be back but, in the meantime, we can all continue to stay safe, stay connected and express our solidarity in other ways. ●



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### WA Branch

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Karratha (08) 9185 4078

### TAS Branch

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## DELEGATE PROFILE

### Ola Solaese

**When a small problem becomes a big one, Ola's there to help.**

Unlike the workplace where she had previously been employed, there wasn't a culture of trade union membership.

"The first company I worked for had a very strong union presence - everyone was in a union," Ola said.

"But when I moved to ResMed, that just wasn't the case.

"Then one day an AMWU Organiser came in to talk to us. There were a few of us who had been union members at other workplaces, so we decided to join.

"There were only a few of us at first, but things are gradually changing."

Ola says that she was attracted to being part of a union because of the way that union members look out for each other.

"Unions have always been good to me," Ola says.

"They always help other people, not only me, but they help the other members."

It's that community spirit and care for others that now drives Ola as a Workplace delegate at ResMed.

At first, Ola was reluctant to take on delegate responsibilities. But with no-one else on her shift putting up their hand, Ola decided that she would step up.

"Sometimes small problems at work can become a big deal, especially if you don't have support.

"I thought to myself, maybe I can help other people. When they need their union, I can talk to them and give them advice."

Now Ola is trying to get more of her colleagues to get involved in the AMWU and build strength in the workplace.

# DELEGATES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

She says part of the challenge is to overcome misconceptions that some workers have, especially those who haven't been exposed to trade unionism before.

"I encourage people to join - and sometimes people are interested, but they feel a bit scared.

"So I try to let people know that the union is here to support them, and represent them to the company."

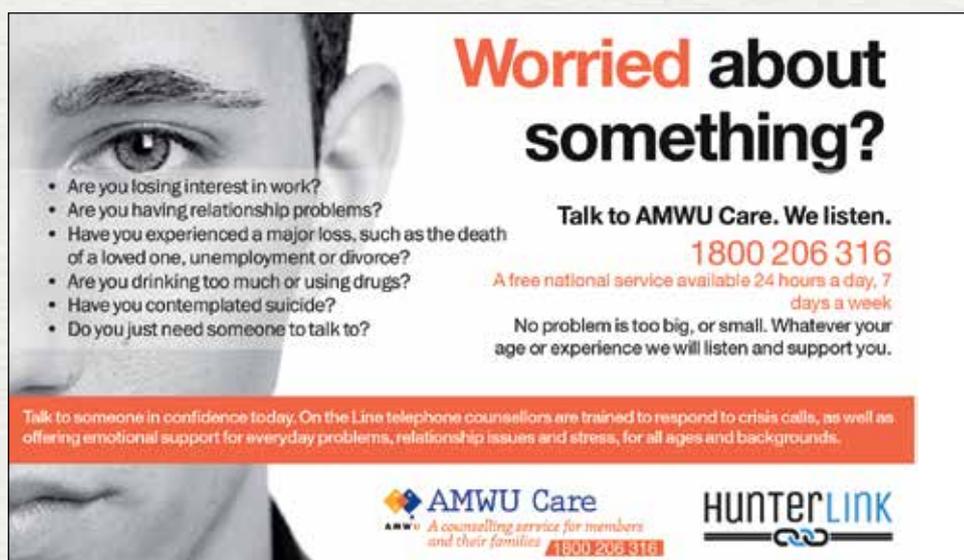
It's been a huge few months for workers at ResMed. The company has been at the centre of the pandemic response - producing much-needed medical supplies for hospitals around Australia and across the world.

ResMed has itself had to change its operational practices, and Ola says workers have had to adapt to new shift arrangements, wearing masks and getting their temperatures tested as they walk in the door.

Like all workers, however, Ola is looking forward to life getting back to normal.

Camping and taking her kids to weekend sport will be high on her post-pandemic 'to do list' - along with a trip back to her country-of-birth, Samoa, once travel restrictions are eased.

In the meantime, you can count on Ola to keep working hard and looking after her mates. ●



**Worried about something?**

- Are you losing interest in work?
- Are you having relationship problems?
- Have you experienced a major loss, such as the death of a loved one, unemployment or divorce?
- Are you drinking too much or using drugs?
- Have you contemplated suicide?
- Do you just need someone to talk to?

**Talk to AMWU Care. We listen.**

**1800 206 316**  
A free national service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

No problem is too big, or small. Whatever your age or experience we will listen and support you.

Talk to someone in confidence today. On the Line telephone counsellors are trained to respond to crisis calls, as well as offering emotional support for everyday problems, relationship issues and stress, for all ages and backgrounds.

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