ROUGH LANDING
THE PITFALLS OF FLY-IN-FLY-OUT EMPLOYMENT

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BILL LUDWIG
COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

In terms of Australia’s cultural and economic development, The Australian Workers’ Union occupies a very special place.

From the ballads of Banjo Paterson to the heyday’s of the 1950s when our country literally “rode on the sheep’s back”, the AWU has been representing the interests of regional and rural working families. It’s a legacy that we continue to live up to right to this day.

There aren’t too many places in Australia’s bush that you can go where you won’t find an AWU member or an AWU office, and our industrial influence on regional and rural Australia has helped shape this nation. Our influence has also helped shape the approach of governments past and present with respect to continued service delivery, social responsibility and public infrastructure in these non-metropolitan regions.

For many AWU members and, indeed, for many working families in the bush, the distances from places like Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane can create an atmosphere where it is easy to believe that their interests are sometimes a second-order issue.

But this is far from the truth. In this modern age of information technology, computers and the World Wide Web, what once was the seemingly insurmountable challenge of distance is now progressively being eroded.

And it is precisely in this sort of environment, with these types of opportunities, that good governments step up to the mark and make the long-term strategic decisions to invest in our future prosperity and our children’s futures.

That is why this union, as an employee organisation firmly grounded in the needs of the bush, wholeheartedly supports the visionary work of the federal Labor government to invest in a National Broadband Network and bring the opportunities of the future to our children today.

“… good governments step up to the mark and make the long-term strategic decisions to invest in our future prosperity…”
For the best part of this year, the thing that’s really been dominating the AWU’s agenda is the state of manufacturing in Australia.

Put simply, domestic manufacturing is facing its greatest crisis since the Great Depression. I’ve been visiting work sites across the country, and that’s what I hear and see time after time. So whenever I’m down in Canberra, I’m taking that message straight to the federal government.

It’s not easy to talk about – because this crisis is hurting way too many AWU members – but it’s important that we do. The simple fact is something needs to be done, and it needs to be done now.

The manufacturing crisis is caused by three key factors: the high Australian dollar, the macroeconomic side effects of the mining boom and unfair competition from products illegally dumped on the Australian marketplace. What we see is that our export competitiveness is hurting, imports are crowding out the market, and demand for domestic manufacturing is hovering at dangerously low levels.

For the sake of the Australian manufacturing industry, we can’t just bury our heads in the sand. For the sake of our broader economy, we can’t just rely on the mining boom to carry us through our current financial uncertainty. Most importantly, we can’t let Dutch disease become Australia’s ailment. If we resign to market forces that allow the mining boom to strip capital, investment and labour from all other sectors, then we’re putting our long-term income, jobs and industries at risk.

Australia will need manufacturing jobs during and after the mining boom. The resources sector employs just 200,000 people; compare that to our one-million strong manufacturing workforce. The mining sector can never hope to replace manufacturing jobs lost over the course of the boom.

That’s why the AWU is fighting hard to make sure that finding a way forward for manufacturing is front and centre on the national stage. We want our manufacturing industry to stay competitive, and to continue to provide good, secure jobs for our members.

Our union fought for a national conversation on manufacturing – and we got it with the Future Jobs Forum. At that forum, the AWU and AMWU put forward a joint discussion paper calling for a broad-based agenda to support manufacturing.

The paper explored ideas such as increased transparency on the use of local content; accelerated depreciation for resources companies on assets using locally manufactured goods; and a high-level, tripartite body to address productivity.

The Future Jobs Forum was the first step in the right direction for manufacturing – and we welcome the announcements we’ve seen from the government since. Greater transparency in tendering programs for resource projects will give local manufacturers a chance to compete on a level playing field. On top of that, the manufacturing taskforce, chaired by the prime minister herself, will properly investigate the issues the industry is facing.

But, it’ll come as no surprise to you that we think there’s still more work to be done. As we move into 2012, the union will ramp up its campaign to protect good manufacturing jobs. We’re setting our sights on China; in particular, their grossly unfair trade practices, which are crippling Australian manufacturing. We strongly believe the federal government should be coordinating a diplomatic effort to pressure the Chinese to float their currency. We strongly believe it’s time to stand up and send the message loud and clear that Australia is not the dumping ground for China’s cheap exports. And we strongly believe that it’s time China started playing by international trade rules, just like Australia does.

Global trade should never be a race to the bottom on employment, environmental or regulatory standards.

It’s a big fight, and it won’t be easy. But the AWU has a long, proud tradition of standing shoulder to shoulder with our members.”
LETTERS

MAILCALL

YOUR NEWS AND VIEWS

WATCH OUT OR YOU MAY LOSE SOME ANNUAL LEAVE

New federal awards do not include annual leave loading or union picnic days, and even remove the ability to accrue leave whilst absent on workers’ compensation. To make sure this does not happen to you, AWU officials and workers are demanding that these entitlements become enshrined in enterprise agreements.

Recent agreements at Pfizer, BOC and OneSteel all include these rights, but they don’t come easily when management attempts to minimise the content of an agreement. Make sure you don’t miss out. Talk to your AWU organiser and your fellow workers, and let everyone know how important this is to you.

HAVE YOUR SAY IN YOUR MAGAZINE

Send correspondence to members@nat.awu.net.au or Australian Workers’ Union, Level 10, 377-383 Sussex Street, Sydney, NSW 2000. All letters and emails must include the sender’s name along with address and phone number for verification purposes (these will not be published).

By submitting your letter for publication, you agree that we may edit the letter for legal, space or other reasonable reasons and may, after publication in the magazine, republish it on the internet or in other media.

Views expressed on the “Mail Call” page are not necessarily those of the AWU.

VALE MAREK PRADEN

Sadly, our much-loved workmate, Marek Praden passed away at work on October 22, 2011. Marek started work at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane, in 1979, and worked in many areas throughout his time there. He became a union rep about four years ago because he wanted to help his fellow workmates with any problems and issues they had. He was working through his second Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and it took its toll on everyone, but Marek loved every minute of it and was always ready to fight for what was right.

However, with the stress of the situation, Marek’s mates were worried about him and had suggested to him that he give up being a rep and concentrate on his health. However anyone who knew Marek also knew that he could never have done that. He was proud to wear his union shirt and could never give that up.

We will all miss him dearly at the hospital and while it will never be the same, we will always remember him and his union solidarity.

Shamus O’Bell
Queensland

CONGRATULATIONS!

The winner of the ME EveryDay Transaction Account with $500 credit offered last issue was Troy Smolenaars from Port Kembla, NSW.
AWU 2011 SURVEY

The Australian Workers’ Union works hard at representing your interests in the workplace and in order for us to do this effectively, we need to know about you.

That is why we have sent you a members’ survey along with this issue of The Australian Worker.

The information you provide us will enable the Union to understand your needs clearly and implement effective campaigns to protect and enhance your rights at work.

Please support the survey because it will contribute to making your working rights, and those of your fellow union members, better and safer.

All AWU members who respond will receive an AWU baseball cap and will be entered into a draw for the chance to win one ME EveryDay Transaction Account with $1,000 credit.

AS A THANK YOU, THOSE MEMBERS WHO COMPLETE THE SURVEY WILL RECEIVE:
1 AN AWU BASEBALL CAP
2 ENTRY INTO A DRAW FOR ONE LUCKY MEMBER TO WIN AN ME EVERYDAY TRANSACTION ACCOUNT WITH $1,000 CREDIT*.

*For terms and conditions please go to http://www.awu.net.au/census2011

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The manufacturing industry in Australia is in crisis, which means nearly one million Australian jobs are at risk. Yet, we’re told we’ve never had it so good. The resources sector is generating record export figures and in Western Australia, particularly, it seems like the good times are rolling and its bounteous mineral wealth will be our salvation.

Wrong – that is unless you subscribe to the “all your eggs in one basket” school of economic theory. Prosperity borne of an abundance of mineral resources is not sustainable in the long-term. Australia needs an innovative manufacturing sector to generate the research and development, future job training and knock-on employment in other sectors – and to keep many smaller regional communities viable and alive.

But manufacturing as a percentage of gross domestic product has fallen to 8.5 per cent. It was once 27 per cent.

The signs are everywhere you look. Workers in Adelaide and Port Melbourne had some cause for alarm when GM Holden recently announced that 2014 could well be the last year that its iconic Commodore would be designed and engineered in Australia.

At this stage, no job losses are predicted, but we’ve heard that before and that ringing sound we’re hearing is a warning bell for car manufacturing.
One of the most glaring examples of the sorry state that is the Australian manufacturing industry can be found at BlueScope Steel. Directly after receiving assurances of assistance (through the Steel Transformation Plan, which the AWU had fought hard to support) under the federal government’s carbon price scheme, BlueScope announced a plan to axe more than 1000 jobs from its operations in Port Kembla, NSW, and Western Port in Victoria. Among other departments, the company shut down a blast furnace, a slab-caster line and a hot-strip mill.

The company has incurred losses of more than $1 billion in the past financial year, yet that did not stop its board awarding themselves executive bonuses of some $3.05 million.

Announcing its decision to exit the export market, BlueScope cited the high Australian dollar, “disloyal” local customers and high raw materials prices. This cut little ice with long-term employees such as Manny Da Rocha, a union delegate at Port Kembla, who reckons slashing the workforce has been on the board’s agenda for some time.

“I’ve been with the company for about 16-and-a-half years, and morale is at the lowest it’s ever been,” he says. “Something this big, it has to have been in the pipeline for at least 10 or 12 months. As soon as they secured that carbon tax money they announced they would cut production by half. That’s pretty cynical.”

Manny says that apart from the older blokes accepting redundancies, the impact on the Port Kembla community will be devastating.

“Sure the younger guys can get new jobs, but not in the Illawarra – some will be travelling to Western Australia, some to Queensland – and for people with kids and ties in the area, it’s not that easy to just pack up and move.”

With many local contractors and businesses relying on the mill, the fallout from the closures will be widespread.

“It’s the guy in the corner shop hurting if families move out of the area,” Manny says. “And lots of small businesses will suffer – for instance, the company that supplies the work clothes – that’s 1000 less uniforms.”

Manny notes that the company had been allowing its Port Kembla operations to deteriorate for a while by not reinvesting in the plant. “It’s an old plant and they’ve been allowing things to run down, to the point where we’re getting structural failures.”

The health and safety implication of the closures and redundancies also concerns Robbie Rudd at Western Port in Victoria, where job losses are expected to top 200 workers and contractors, and BSL has shut down two entire sections of the operation and cut back on one crew per section.

“Even the fire crew have had people go,” Robbie says. “They had a long-term plan, but in the short term we needed to sort something out so that our people would be safe on site. At the moment they’re covering the weekends with guys on overtime. It didn’t seem like safety was a concern at all.”

Robbie is also convinced that BSL had an agenda and had been planning the closures for some time. “The letters people were given, the date had been liquid-papered out and then the letter had been photocopied. You could see where it had been altered.”

He describes the mood of the workers as, “despair and anger”.

“People are walking around as though they’ve been kicked in the guts,” Robbie says. “Most believe the place will be shut in two years and it’s eating away at them. The only job to have is a director – then you can write your own cheque.”

Mark Dos Santos at Port Kembla is another who can see the writing on the wall – in six-feet-high letters.

“Most of the guys left behind think it will all be gone in a year or two,” he says. “It was a wake-up call for everyone. Guys who thought they had a job for life are now looking for a different future.”
The textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industry has been in free-fall for the past decade, symbolised by Pacific Brands moving manufacture of the equally iconic Bonds singlets offshore last year. The food processing industry is about to face its own showdown at the OK Corral with the release of the report by consultants AT Kearney, commissioned by the Australian Food and Grocery Council. It shows that the industry has had five years of minimal growth. Without substantial reform, it could be forced to lose more than 40 per cent of its workforce within 10 years. This would be a death blow to small towns in rural NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

The problem is that we have a two-speed economy in which boom and bust are uneasy bedfellows. For instance, huge amounts of steel are needed to support rapid resource industry expansion, yet that steel is being imported while Australian steel workers are losing their jobs. The commodities needed to produce steel in Australia, such as coking coal and iron ore, have become prohibitively expensive because of the higher dollar – and because resource companies charge local manufacturers the same price as they do overseas customers.

According to Australian Industries Group research, Australian manufacturing industries have been bleeding jobs for the past 11 months. The causes are varied. The strong Australian dollar, weak domestic demand, increased overseas competition and uncertainty about the proposed carbon price scheme all play a part. Whatever the cause, everybody concerned agrees that if we don’t act now, we may not have a manufacturing sector for much longer. But those involved don’t necessarily share common ground when it comes to creating a solution to the problem.

Talk to a lot of people in business and government, and you’d think mining is all we need down the track. However, despite the euphoria in certain sectors currently benefiting from the resources boom, commodities prices will not remain inflated forever – and those resources are finite. What’s more, as it currently employs about 200,000 workers (as opposed to about one million in the manufacturing sector) it is not realistic to expect mining to take up the jobs slack as manufacturing jobs are eroded. There’s just no way it can.

The fact is that the mining boom could be used to support and encourage the manufacturing sector, but only if a reasonable level of local content

As a worker at the “last mill standing”, Mark has seen a little bit of capital investment injected into the plant, but sees it as something of a last gasp. “They have replaced a few big-ticket items, but then again, we are the last hot strip mill left in the country. We’ve received all the leftover orders and that should keep us in the domestic market for another two or three years. But it is definitely shrinking. Last year we did a total of 2185 tonnes, whereas we were doing 3500 tonnes a year.”

Mark reckons there’s a feeling the government should do more rather than let the industry just rust away, but knows it’s an uphill battle competing with giant Chinese and Indian steel mills. “The guys are more pissed off at upper management who concentrate more on setting up in China and India, ready for the big bail.”

Mark’s despair at seeing the imminent end of a job he loves and one for which he has developed his skills for nearly a decade is palpable. “When there’s not another mill or blast furnace in the country, where do you go? And once we’ve got rid of all the manufacturing jobs in 20 or 30 years, and when the Australian mining sandpit runs dry, are we all going to be salesmen selling stuff that has been made in China?”

WHAT’S THE GOVERNMENT DOING?

The plight of manufacturing dominated the October Future Jobs Forum summit in Canberra, chaired by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who announced a plan – the changes to be included in next year’s budget – to assist Australian manufacturing to cope with the current uncertainty.

Major projects (worth more than $2 billion) will be forced to reveal details on what opportunities are on offer for Australian business in order to qualify for a 5 per cent tariff exemption on imported goods.

Since 2010, companies bidding for government contracts have had to show how local business could be involved. This will be extended to government grants of $20 million – including those to the states.

Prime Minister Gillard will also chair a manufacturing task force to look at education, innovation and how to deal with high terms of trade.

Under the plan, large grants funded by the $10 billion Clean Energy Finance Corporation would be included in local content rules. This could well boost regional employment.
is employed in these massive projects. Instead, companies such as Chevron source billions of dollars’ worth of overseas steel for its giant Gorgon gas project in WA; mining magnate Gina Rinehart imports rail gauges from China for the private railway line she is building to service Queensland mines; and CITIC Pacific uses Chinese concrete at its Cape Preston, WA, Sino Iron mine.

Likewise, many of the overseas manufacturers being patronised by Australian mining concerns are Chinese-owned, so they’re also getting a helping hand courtesy of an artificially low Chinese currency. It doesn’t seem fair. And it isn’t fair.

“Innovation” is often touted as the cavalry that will gallop to the rescue of Australian manufacturing. Certainly, it is the recipient of much government focus – and with some justification. Australian firms have been guilty of falling behind in both research and development to come up with new products, and working out how to be more efficient as companies. No question, we do have to work smarter and do things better. But, in the short term, to put it simply: a dead company can’t innovate.

As AWU National Secretary Paul Howes says, “Businesses can only innovate if they are assisted to survive extreme and unusual market conditions representative of a one-off adjustment in the economy. We’ve got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to harness our natural wealth and ensure a thriving manufacturing sector – to remain a nation that makes things.”

Paul has a few ideas as to how Australia can avoid coming down with the dreaded “Dutch Disease”. (The term was coined by The Economist magazine in 1977 to describe the rapid collapse of Netherlands manufacturing after the discovery of a huge natural gas field in the 1950s.). See box below...

The AWU wants to “name and shame” resource companies that don’t use Australian-manufactured materials. Australian companies often don’t even get the opportunity to tender on some projects.

“We have to boost domestic consumption [of Australian manufactures], or in a short time there will be none,” AWU National Secretary Paul Howes says.

The AWU also argues for a concerted diplomatic attempt to persuade China to float its currency as a means of levelling the international trade playing field. “Cracking down on China’s currency manipulation should be at the top of our foreign policy agenda,” says Paul. “Estimates suggest China is undervaluing the yuan by up to 40 per cent, driving export industries and jobs to China at the expense of Australian industry.”

The union would like to see the federal government institute a strong local procurement policy and an accelerated rate of depreciation for resource and construction companies that include local content, and act to substantially reduce the impact of dumping on the vulnerable Australian market.
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ICON Place
Level 4, 270 Adelaide Street, Brisbane
Remote-area workers and their communities confront a sweeping range of unique problems. And the situation is set to worsen over time.
The mining boom may be good for the national economy, but its effects are yielding great costs for the many whose communities it touches. Donna Reeves reports on “fly-in-fly-out” employment.

If you’ve been to an airport recently, you would have noticed a new type of traveller. Decked out in work boots and slinging duffel bags over their shoulders, they check in at regional airline counters, bound for towns like Moranbah and Karratha. They’re heading to mining jobs in remote areas of Australia, where they will work long shifts for weeks at a time, only to fly out again for a break and then repeat the cycle. They are part of a phenomenon known as the fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) workforce.

Lured by the promise of large salaries and a generous amount of days off between shifts, more and more people are being attracted to the mining sector in search of fortune. Skilled workers are leaving jobs in the cities and signing up to high-paying jobs with mining companies, but this type of transient work solution comes at a cost.

Indeed, these fly-in-fly-out, and also drive-in-drive-out (DIDO), arrangements are really only a short-term, quick-fix solution to the labour issues associated with this country’s resources boom. It is an approach that doesn’t address any of the deep structural issues of remote work, infrastructure investment and skills development in the Australian economy.

This “ready-made workforce” takes workers from the cities and places them in remote or rural locations. This locks out existing communities from the benefits linked to new projects, impinges upon families and creates isolation and stress for workers.

The situation is expected to worsen over time. Australian resource companies have already announced that they will commit around $200 billion towards capital investment in new and expanded resource projects, and it’s expected that another $400 billion will be invested in the industry. However, this increased investment doesn’t include spending in areas such as...
The only parties that really benefit from the FIFO/DIDO arrangements are the companies. Short-term gains include not having to stump up any money for infrastructure, housing relocation and skills training. By failing to provide any housing or other facilities, mining companies are draining the resources and services of the local communities in which they are based. Simply, they are maximising their short-term profits at the expense of the local community.

A WEB OF ISSUES
With skilled workers being flown in and mining companies reluctant to spend money on training, locals are not able to take advantage of the mining jobs. Many mining towns have high Indigenous populations, and their lack of inclusion in local industry reduces the potential of “closing the gap” with the non-indigenous population in terms of the social and economic benefits that can come from natural resource projects.

The inequality is also evident with cashed-up FIFO workers driving up accommodation costs in the local towns. With no proper housing provided by mining companies, demand consistently outstrips supply, leading to ridiculously steep rents and inflationary pressures on already-burdened communities. “You would have to be a doctor to be able [to afford to] live in these towns,” writes Max, in an online news site talking about FIFO.

“It is a lot cheaper to rent a penthouse on the Sunshine Coast or Surfers than it is to rent a
Local communities feeling the negative effects of FIFO are starting to speak out, highlighting problems the AWU has long been pointing out.

In an article printed recently, Brisbane’s The Courier Mail reported that in the Queensland town of Moranbah, the population had doubled over the past few years because of FIFO workers. By next year, it said that Isaac Shire, in which Moranbah is located, will have more non-resident workers than actual residents.

Locals were reported as saying that the mining boom is “crippling” the state’s coal towns. Health services are overwhelmed and understaffed, rents are becoming some of the dearest in the state, roads are being choked with mining traffic, and very little, if anything, is being put back into the community.

The health-care system in particular is straining under the load. Trying to access medical care is difficult, as a correspondent points out in a letter to a newspaper:

“I’ve just moved back to Brisbane from Mount Isa and there was one doctor per three thousand people, or so,” she writes. “My partner had influenza and was on the waiting list for a week before getting in to see the doctor, and that was only because we begged and the receptionist felt sorry for us. You had to book an appointment two weeks ahead.”

Independent analysis for the region found that there was only one doctor for every 2750 people. The state average in Queensland is one doctor per 977 people.

Moranbah residents took their concerns about FIFO and its impact to the region’s biggest miner, BHP Billiton. BHP was given a letter from locals expressing their concerns. It said, in part:

- Our towns are dominated by camps of thousands of people while local families struggle with community services and facilities that are grossly inadequate.
- Our towns have the highest median rents in Queensland.
- The roads are dangerously jammed with mining traffic. Our kids have less sporting and recreational facilities than ever.
- There is little suitable family accommodation. Our social infrastructure is not coping.

THE FUTURE

Under present regulations, mining companies are unlikely to move from a FIFO-dominated workforce. In a submission to a parliamentary inquiry aimed at examining the impacts of FIFO, Fortescue Metals admitted it was nearly three times cheaper to employ a FIFO miner compared with a permanent resident because of housing costs and allowances.

It’s not only the residents in mining towns who are doing it tough. FIFO is by its very nature an isolating way of working. It creates a workforce skewed to singles. Those with families are required to spend a lot of time away from them.

Given the choice, it is arguable that most FIFO workers would prefer to relocate their families near to their work rather than endure the relentless travel and separation. While not verified, it could reasonably be assumed that mining companies believe worker productivity would be lessened by this way of working.

Hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of kilometres away from the mining towns, other communities are also feeling the effects of FIFO. These are the communities seeing their skilled workforces leave in droves, returning only on work breaks. They do so with a lot of money in their wallets – their wages outstripping others in their neighbourhoods.

In regions with large manufacturing bases, the skills drain can be devastating. Marginal manufacturing businesses may not be able to source or afford labour, and may be forced into closure.

For other businesses, the high exchange rate brought about by resource exports reduces a business’s ability to compete internationally. Again, closure may result.

Fewer jobs for people, coupled with inflation, creates pressure on people in these “point of origin” towns to consider entering the FIFO workforce in order to be able to maintain their own standards of living and/or avoid unemployment. But, in doing so, a self-fulfilling cycle of problems is created.

The AWU is working to ensure that resource-sector companies are encouraged to invest in local communities, contribute to infrastructure development and investment and invest in the expansion of skills in the local and indigenous communities.
The AWU and the ACTU are behind a push to increase employers’ compulsory contributions to workers’ super funds. Cate Carrigan reports on the Union’s role in improving superannuation entitlements for members.
establish MySuper, a new default fund, with no entry fees and a ban on other hidden costs for members.

The ACTU’s Stand up for Super campaign is urging members to sign a petition backing the reforms and highlighting what they will lose in retirement income if the Coalition succeeds in blocking the changes.

LOOKING AHEAD
AWU National Secretary Paul Howes says 8.4 million Australians will receive an increase in their retirement incomes as a result of the government’s proposed reforms, which would mean $108,000 in extra superannuation for a 30-year-old worker on average weekly earnings in 2011. And even someone the same age with interrupted working patterns due to parenting responsibilities could expect an extra $78,000 in retirement savings.

Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation Bill Shorten says the aim of increasing the superannuation rate is to ensure people don’t get the end of their working life and find they don’t have enough savings.

Bill says many older working Australians do not have enough money for retirement, and that the global financial crisis took a big toll on their superannuation savings. “The truth of the matter is that a lot of people have not saved enough to retire.”

Chief Executive of the 1.8 million member-strong AustralianSuper, Ian Silk, says raising the compulsory contributions
SUPERANNUATION

will ensure a much higher standard of living in retirement for Australian workers.

With the federal treasury estimating that an increase to 12 per cent would boost the retirement saving of an average worker by more than $100,000, Ian says that means, “a much higher standard of living in retirement for Australian workers.”

While Ian – whose organisation has $42 billion in assets – says the amount everyone will need in retirement varies depending on age of retirement, savings and access to the aged pension, boosting super can only help.

“The reforms are aimed at increasing the efficiency of super funds and looking to ensure that people retire with more money.

“It’s going to be easier to transfer funds between super schemes and for many people it will happen automatically. So, if you have forgotten about some super, the government’s reforms will consolidate those and you won’t have to go through the massive paperwork that you often have to now.”

“As part of the package of super reforms, the federal government will abolish tax on super contributions for those earning less than $37,000 a year. That will leave up to $500 a year more in the accounts of 3.5 million workers, 2.1 million of them women.”

Ian says employers will determine how to fund the increased contributions after meeting with unions and workers. This would include discussions on whether the any of the increase would be offset by lower wages.

“In some work places it might be fully offset, in others, partially, in others, not at all.

“The other important aspect is that the increase would take place over a very staggered period. In the first year, it would rise by a quarter of one per cent, in the next year by another quarter, and then by half a per cent increments until it’s fully implemented in 2019.”

SUPPORT THE INCREASE

The federal government’s plans to use some of the money from its proposed resources tax – which has yet to pass Parliament – to fund the super changes, with Ian saying this money would fund any loss in tax revenue from raising the contributions.

For those who might be unsure about the value of superannuation, Ian believes the introduction of compulsory superannuation by the Hawke Government in 1992 has been, “one of the great public and social policy success stories in the post WW11 era. Australia has about $1.4 trillion in super and that is workers’ money, which means it’s accumulating for Australian workers when they retire. That means they are going to have a much better and more comfortable standard of living than if they were just to rely on the aged pension.”

As to the Coalition’s opposition to the changes, Ian urges them to get behind the reforms.

“I would hope the whole Parliament would support the legislation. It’s a great test of leadership for our politicians. Will they forsake short-term political tactics, for the longer-term good of the country?

“The proposal is clearly in the national interest – by building up the nation’s savings pool – as well as providing substantially improved retirement savings for individual workers,” he says.

And, while the GFC hit superannuation funds and investors hard, Ian says workers should be reassured that fund managers invest in a balanced portfolio – including, shares, property and infrastructure – to ensure the best long-term income for members.

The reforms come as Australia’s retirement savings scheme has been ranked second only to the Netherlands in an international index.

The latest Global Pension Index placed it second in terms of payments to retirees but indicated Australia could emerge on top if the government succeeds in lifting the superannuation guarantee to 12 per cent.

The AustralianSuper website (www.australiansuper.com) has a free calculator where you can estimate the amount of money you will have at retirement and ways to boost that amount.

UNIONS STAND UP FOR SUPER CAMPAIGN


TWO: Sign the petition.

THREE: Talk to your union about including more super in your next collective agreement.

FOUR: Add a little extra to your super by making co-contributions.

FIVE: Join a low-fee industry super fund from which all profits go to members.
Our fees are low to help you retire on a high.

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Peter, AustralianSuper member

AustralianSuper looks after more than $42 billion, for over 1.8 million everyday Australians.

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MELLOW YELLOW. Kevin Huet, Brett Calagghan and Bryan Canny take care of production and maintenance at Orica, a sulphur manufacturing plant in North Shore.
make me the most popular bloke in town,” he says, smiling. The last month or two has been especially tough on Gavin. Geelong defeated Collingwood in the 2011 Grand Final, and it seems that every AWU member in the region (approximately 2700) without a Magpie allegiance has been on his case. “It’s ongoing, it doesn’t stop, it’s relentless,” he says. “Dick Gray’s (AWU Victorian Branch President) been the worst. He’s pretty much the most one-eyed, fanatical Geelong supporter you’ll ever meet.”

This morning, Gavin will try and put the Premiership pain behind him, touring three regional workplaces. We begin with manufacturer Chemring, with its factory at Lara, 15 minutes’ drive from Geelong. In Australian film history, this part of the world provided some of the scenery for the

Situated on the coast of Victoria, the city of Geelong is unique. Not only is it the gateway to the stunning Great Ocean Road, it has also spawned some of Australia’s great sporting legends. But Geelong is a hard-working city as well, as Michael Blayney discovered when he called in to say “g’day”.

The AFL Premiership race was run and won more than a month ago, but the city of Geelong is still in party mode. Stroll down the main drag Moorabool Street and the mood is chipper and cheery, the afterglow hovering over the town like a Gary Ablett speccie. So, why is Geelong’s AWU organiser Gavin Penn feeling a bit glum? “Mate, I’m a Collingwood supporter, and a union organiser. Sometimes that doesn’t make me the most popular bloke in town,” he says, smiling.

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www.awu.net.au THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER 23
THE HEART OF GEELONG: (Clockwise from left) Split Point Lighthouse of ABC TV’s Round the Twist fame; hard-won football glory.
first Mad Max movie and, coincidentally, Chemring’s products wouldn’t look out of place smoking it up on a Mad Max set.

The company manufactures “advanced air countermeasures and pyrotechnics for the defence and civilian sector”. More simply, workers here make distress and warning signals, amongst other things that go bang. When a flare goes off in the crowd of an A-League soccer game, AWU on-site delegate Lee Beggs probably had a hand in it, so to speak.

Lee meets us outside Chemring’s front gate as the site’s tight security means we don’t have authority to go any further. “I’m a chemical mixer, a batcher. I take the raw chemical, mix it with other chemicals to make an oxidant and a fuel, which we then mix together later to make an explosive composition,” he says, matter-of-factly. “It then reacts with a priming composition, which produces the distress signal.”

With such heady cocktails mixed daily on Lee’s work site, it’s no surprise that safety issues are a huge concern at Chemring, especially when management looks for new measures to cut costs and increase production.

“We want everything to be perfect, which can be tough when there’s not enough time to perform tasks,” he says.

Lee has been Chemring’s delegate for the past 12 months, taking care of 20 production staff. Recently, he’s been preparing for the latest EBA negotiations. “We’re looking for better conditions, better wages, better protection. Things have been slipping here for a while, so we’ll be making sure we gain back some of our entitlements.”

Our next port of call is Orica, a sulphur manufacturing plant in North Shore, an industrial suburb of Geelong. Responsibility for production and maintenance lies on the shoulders of Brett Callaghan, Kevin Huet, and Bryan Canny.

When Brett started working at Orica North Shore four years ago, his two partners were already well-entrenched in their positions. “It’s just the three of us, but we’re all older blokes, so we get along pretty well,” he says.

Orica utilises excess liquid sulphur from the nearby Shell oil refinery to produce granules for the fertiliser and mining industries. In one corner of the warehouse sits a large mound of bright yellow sulphur granules that, up close, look similar to pineapple jelly crystals. These granules are either bagged up by the lads or shipped off in bulk.
The three men all live locally. Bryan has been a Torquay resident for 10 years, his house just a few minutes’ walk from one of Australia’s finest surf beaches. What does he like about it? Bryan laughs like a man who’s been asked a very stupid question. “It’s pretty obvious what the attraction is in Torquay. You can walk along the beach and do all sorts of nice things.”

As we leave Orica, Gavin and fellow AWU organiser Tanya Green discuss the protracted EBA negotiations that are currently affecting this workplace.

“We initiated conversations with management back in December 2010, give or take a month, and it’s taken almost 12 months to reach an agreement,” Tanya says.

The two organisers are both bewildered by management’s unreasonable approach to negotiation as similar agreements have been okayed at other Orica sites. Last week, the AWU applied to the Industrial Relations Commission for a protected action ballot. This will allow the trio to take the appropriate action legally.

“These three workers have given the company incredible flexibility of service over the years. They don’t work a standard roster, and they can get called in at 24 hours’ notice,” Tanya says. “In terms of their family life, they’ve given a lot to Orica.”

“There’s plenty of experience in this building, and these guys are not easily replaceable. Management has been able to get their pound of flesh, but we’re all prepared to fight for what is rightfully theirs,” adds Gavin.

This struggle will be one to keep an eye on.

Our next workplace is one of Geelong’s

“...Ford stood down about 300 workers, and it just tore the town apart.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Orica, famous for its sulphur; Alcoa shop steward Brett “Jabba” Noonan; Tanya and Gavin in the office; Alcoa Pot Room operators Julian Harris, Steve McKinlay and Andrew Scott; Alcoa deputy shop steward and trainer, Trevor Williamson.
POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Geelong’s AWU organiser Tanya Green prides herself on strength at the negotiating table, but this skill is more than matched by her strength over and under the bar in the sport of powerlifting.

A world record holder in the squat discipline in the weight division of 55.5 kilograms, Tanya lifted almost twice her own body weight (107.5 kilograms) at the recent national titles.

“I took to the squat like a duck to water,” Tanya says, adding that she only started competitive powerlifting three years ago. In fact, her first brush with the sport was the result of a rigorous fitness campaign before her wedding day a year earlier.

Competitive powerlifting is similar to weightlifting, although competitors lift the squat, bench-press and deadlift as opposed to the snatch and clean and jerk. The three best lifts are then totalled to find a winner.

Tanya is currently in full training for the World Powerlifting Championships in Scotland, the strictness of the high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet beginning to take its toll. “I just want some normality. At the moment, I eat like an infant as my feeding is all timed. I could really eat a pizza now. Actually, I’m trying not to talk about food because it makes it worse.”

She says, “You have to be incredibly disciplined and I do struggle from time to time,” and she is thankful of support from the AWU and several local Geelong businesses.

“The pay-off is that you achieve things you never imagined you could do. Just going to the Worlds is a fantastic achievement that I didn’t even contemplate doing when I started lifting.”
GOOD SPORTS

Geelong people (Geelongites?) are rightly proud of the town’s uncanny knack of producing champions across all sporting fields. Many of these local heroes have been celebrated in an interactive display mounted directly outside the main gate at the Geelong Football Club’s home ground of Kardinia Park.

The Legends Plaza features a collection of two-metre-tall displays with an image of each sportsperson and a summary of their achievements. The first 14 inductees were unveiled in 2007 with scope for future inclusions. The selection committee need look no further than the town’s AFL team. Cameron Ling, Gary Ablett Jr, Jimmy Bartel and Matthew Scarlett are all local boys, deserving of the honour in the fullness of time.

A LIST OF THE PRESENT INDUCTEES INCLUDES:

- Jack Hawkes Tennis
- James Wilson Jr Horse Racing
- Charles Brownlow Australian Football
- Reg Hickey Australian Football
- Dick Garrard Wrestling
- Lindsay Hassett Cricket
- Leo White Boxing
- Russell Mockridge Cycling
- John Landy Athletics
- Trevor Billingham Athletics
- Ian Redpath Cricket
- Wayne Davies Real Tennis
- Greg Stewart Triathlon
- Simone McKinnis Netball

industrial mainstays. Built in 1963, the Alcoa operation at Point Henry is split into two entities: an aluminium smelter and a rolled products plant. The smelter produces 190,000 tonnes of aluminium a year, and the overall site employs over 600 locals.

“The big three down here are Shell, Ford and Alcoa,” Trevor Williamson, on-site deputy shop steward and Alcoa trainer, says. “A couple of years back, Ford stood down about 300 workers, and it just tore the town apart.”

Alcoa has been a stable employer in the Geelong area for generations. Fathers and sons work side-by-side, loyal to the company. More importantly, the workers are doubly loyal to the union movement and the AWU.

“It’s not that big a town. Everyone knows everyone, and people are always coming up to me to talk union business. I’m happy to do that, but it always seems to be when I’m out doing my shopping at the supermarket,” Trevor laughs.

In recent months, the latest EBA has been negotiated and settled harmoniously, so now the workers wait for any impact the carbon tax imposes on the energy-intensive smelter business. “We don’t have too many hassles down here, so hopefully that won’t cause too much trouble,” says Trevor.

We leave Alcoa behind to explore the area’s tourist hotspots. Geelong is a short 30-minute drive to famous surfing hotspots Torquay and Bells Beach. As the spiritual home of surf company giants Quicksilver, Piping Hot and Rip Curl, Torquay is jam-packed with retail options for the unprepared board rider. There’s even a museum celebrating the history of surfing.

A little further down the Great Ocean Road is the attractive seaside hamlet of Aireys Inlet. Here, you’ll discover Split Point Lighthouse. Younger members (and older members with young children) would recognise the lighthouse as the unforgettable setting for the legendary 1990s television series Round the Twist.

Back in Geelong, the recently upgraded foreshore celebrates the history, tradition, and sheer hard work that made this town what it is today. Home to over 100 hand-painted, wooden bollards casting a whimsical eye over Corio Bay, the foreshore is the perfect spot to take a break and enjoy the crystal blue waters. This is the Geelong of 2011 – much more than a successful football team for 160,000 happy residents.
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2. The funds in Money magazine’s Best of the Best Lowest-Cost Super Funds were chosen from SuperRatings’ platinum-, gold- and silver-rated balance funds and ranked on their annual costs associated with a $50,000 balance. First State Super was the winner in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

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NATIONAL

PAUL HOWES ATTACKS ABBOTT AND COALITION OVER THE STEEL TRANSFORMATION PLAN

As the AWU welcomed the passage of the Steel Transformation Plan through the Senate, AWU National Secretary Paul Howes said every Coalition MP who voted against it should hang their head in shame.

The plan, which he declared a sensible policy designed to save steel jobs, is designed to provide a $300 million lifeline for the Australian steel industry.

“The AWU has been fighting to support the steel industry in this country for generations — it's the backbone of Australian manufacturing,” Paul said.

“We fought tooth and nail to get the right support for our manufacturing sectors through the debate on carbon pricing, including a special, sectoral package for steel.

“This is a plan backed by both BlueScope and OneSteel, because they know this legislation is crucial to helping the industry navigate the economic uncertainty ahead.

“It's sensible, considered policy designed to save steel jobs — helping steelmakers through the transition to a price on carbon, and supporting them as they invest and innovate.”

But, in opposing the measure, Paul said, “The Liberal-National Coalition has lost all credibility on manufacturing.

“Tony Abbott looked steelworkers in the eye and told them he'd back them, then he turned around in Parliament and voted against a package to save steel.

“On top of that, we’ve had Barnaby Joyce frothing at the mouth every chance he gets – pushing a whole load of hot air about jobs in manufacturing and other sectors.”

Condemning the National Party senator, Paul said, “What Barnaby skims over during his beetroot-faced tirades is that he and his Coalition colleagues voted against $300 million in funding to secure steel jobs.

“Our members are rightly outraged that at a time like this — when manufacturing is facing its worst crisis since the Great Depression – the Coalition would move to block support for steel.”

He concluded, “That sort of recklessness might be good enough for the Opposition, but it's not good enough for our members, and it's definitely not good enough for the broader Australian steel industry.”

NATIONAL

ANSETT’S LAST FLIGHT FINALLY LANDS

After 10 long years, in September, the Australian trade union movement finally laid to rest the ghost of a long struggle with the final settlement of its claim of entitlements for workers of Ansett Airlines.

Back in 2001, the collapse of Ansett saw thousands of workers lose their jobs. When the company was grounded by administrators, some 15,000 workers were affected. Many AWU members were among them and, from day one, the union was determined they should not be left out of pocket.

Over the past 10 years, the union has worked with the company’s administrators to, extract every cent they could for the worker.

The final dividend payment was made last month, bringing the average payment to 96 cents in the dollar owed in workers’ entitlements. In total, the thousands of former employees have collectively received $727.6 million in 14 payments.

“The Ansett collapse impacted on the livelihood of an enormous number of people. It has been a source of sadness and frustration for a decade,” AWU National Secretary Paul Howes said. Adding that while it had been a long and arduous journey, the effort had been worth it.

The payment of almost all of the workers’ entitlements delivers some justice for the Ansett workforce. Shortly after the airline was grounded, the workers faced receiving just a fraction of what they were owed.

The ACTU, along with those unions that covered Ansett employees, worked both publicly and behind the scenes to ensure the workers were not short-changed.

Final Ansett sign is removed from the old Ansett Airlines Domestic Terminal at Sydney airport.

And that included making sure that employees were at the front of the queue of creditors.

“It is wrong that workers are expected to go through this sort of protracted ordeal as the Ansett employees did, in order to retrieve their entitlements,” Paul said.

The Ansett collapse had highlighted deficiencies in the General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme, most of which have now been rectified by the Gillard Government’s Fair Entitlements Guarantee. It means 97 per cent of eligible workers will receive all the redundancy pay they are owed because of the removal of a cap on redundancy payments at 16 weeks.

“These changes have been in place since early 2011,” Paul said. “However they need to be legislated so that any anti-worker government is unable to take them away and leave workers ripped off”
GREATER NSW
PROTEST RAGE OVER STATE GOVERNMENT CUTS

In keeping with tradition and ideology, the NSW Liberal Government has decided to take its workers on in battle soon after having been elected in March this year.

The three pillars of this conservative government’s treatment of its workers are to remove important protections for workers in occupational health and safety, to downgrade the authority of the Industrial Relations Commission, and to smash the ability of workers to negotiate wages and conditions effectively.

Frustrated workers and their unions came together outside the NSW Parliament in September to protest the impact of the IR changes on workers and their families. More than 40,000 workers from across the state turned up, which many commentators suggested made for the largest demonstration to have taken place in Macquarie Street in over 30 years.

AWU members from National Parks, forestry, RTA, TAFE and school farm assistants came out in force to protest the government’s anti-worker reforms.

AWU Greater NSW Branch Secretary Russ Collison said, “I am proud of the efforts of our members who have given up their time to voice their opposition against the conservative government’s anti-worker agenda. “This is worse than situation WorkChoices. The laws have taken away any ability of the Commission to be the independent arbitrator… [it is now there] merely to implement government policy”

AWU National Parks Senior Delegate Garth Toner said, “I feel like we have been kicked in the guts by our new Liberal premier. It seems politicians are all too happy to back-slap us during fire-fighting season, but when we need their help to ensure that we have the right equipment and training, they’re nowhere to be seen. “We simply want the right to negotiate and put forward ideas that will allow us to continue to protect and serve our community”

The NSW Liberal Government policy is to restrict wages to 2.5 per cent per annum, with any further increases to be achieved through guaranteed and delivered cost savings. These savings mainly involve cuts in workforce numbers through natural attrition. Failure to replace forestry and national park workers leaves the public exposed to greater bush fire risk and the overall ability for the public service to deliver quality services expected by the community.

The AWU has called on members to voice their concerns by contacting their local state politicians and demanding that the number of workers in frontline positions be maintained and that vacant positions be filled.

GREATER NSW
EMPLOYERS PROCLAIM FOUL TO BE FAIR

The Business Council and various other employer groups have recently called for major changes to Fair Work Australia laws to stop enterprise agreements requiring management to consult with employees and their unions about changes to business operations.

Under their proposed changes, management wants the absolute right to implement decisions without appropriate consultation with the workforce. Management wants the right to implement redundancies where it alone decides which worker goes and when they go, so as to satisfy its financial bottom line.

Workers at many AWU sites have negotiated effective consultation clauses into their agreements. Some examples include consultation on workplace changes, clear classification structures, voluntary redundancies, training clauses and consultative committees.

AWU Greater NSW Branch Secretary Russ Collison said, “Workers are not machines that can be discarded whenever management feels like it. Workers have families and take pride in their work to ensure the place does well.

“Good, robust discussion is what is needed to make sure any changes to workplace organisation and structure are the right changes to implement.”

All too often, workers face increasing workloads because departing workers are not being replaced, or there is a lack of training opportunities, or because workers are being made forcibly redundant without consultation.

These practices are unacceptable as they lead in many cases to inefficiency in the workplace.

This further highlights why consultation in the workplace is required.

All Australian Workers’ Union members are strongly encouraged to send letters or emails to their local federal politicians telling them that their right to consultation in the workplace must remain within industrial relations laws.
QUEENSLAND

BYGRAVE BUT NOT BYGONE

After having been a long-time employee of the council of Nanango Shire, which has now been amalgamated into South Burnett Regional Council, and even longer a loyal AWU member, Peter Bygrave has made the decision to retire.

Peter has been a staunch AWU man and worked hard to keep the union membership at his council at 100 per cent. His Nanango depot stands out in the South Burnett region as its strongest AWU site.

This has been reflected in working conditions superior to those of the surrounding councils of Kingaroy, Murgon, and Wondai, with which

PORT KEMBLA

AWU DELIVERS FOR BLUESCOPE WORKERS

For AWU members employed at BlueScope Steel Port Kembla and by its contractors, the news on August 22 that the company planned to exit the export market and had lost had lost $1.05 billion dollars in the financial year ending June 30 could not have been worse.

That it also planned to close down No. 6 Blast Furnace, No 4 Coke Ovens Battery, one BOS vessel, and one slab caster line also potentially meant a loss of 700 jobs.

AWU Port Kembla Branch Secretary Andy Gillespie cut short a long-planned trip overseas to co-ordinate strategies to deal with the myriad issues and challenges facing members.

Branch officials and delegates at Port Kembla Branch participated in a series of meetings at which BlueScope department managers had to explain how each of the planned job cuts was necessary to achieve, first, the production cuts, and second, the restructure.

Branch officials and delegates reduced the predicted figure of job losses from 700 to 440, following the meetings, with approximately 260 jobs being saved in the process.

A mass meeting of all AWU

PORT KEMBLA

CROMFORD PIPE EMPLOYEES EBA SUCCESS

In October, employees at Moss Vale’s Cromford Pipe, a manufacturer and distributor of industrial plastic pipes, fittings and accessories, achieved their first EBA with an improved safety outcome, following demands from employees wanting to understand better their entitlements.

The site now has 26 AWU members, and the EBA signed off on October 14 ensures that safety now takes top priority in the company’s workplace.

The company previously had no union representation on site, and AWU Port Kembla Southern Highlands Branch Organiser Boris Baraldi spoke with a small group of its employees in early May.

Employees working on the pipe-extrusion lines wanted to understand their rights at work. They had raised a number of questions in relation to safety practices, and had become concerned about fumes within their workplace arising from the pipe-extrusion process and a lack of forced ventilation.

At the time, Cromford Pipe employed 16 permanent employees across four shift crews, with another eight being from labour-hire agencies, and each crew comprises six employees.

After meeting with the AWU, the union was able to sign up 16 employees over a two-week period across the pipe production, maintenance and yard sections of the business.

The AWU was issued right of entry on May 18, and met with employees and subsequently with the management team.

After a series of meetings over a two-month period, five delegates were recruited and EBA negotiations began on July 23.

On October 14, 24 employees voted, with a result of 21 to three in favour of the EBA. This represented a number of significant wins for employees. Negotiations had taken less than three months, and employees on the pipe-production shift continental roster have gained a number of entitlements above the modern award provisions, including 240 hours of annual leave and 120 hours of personal leave.

Wages and allowances for all employees covered by the EBA now exceed those contained in the modern award.

As a result of the union access clause and delegates’ training, lost-time injuries at Cromford Pipe have been reduced to zero for 134 days.

Lee Davies, Cromford Pipe shift team leader and AWU delegate, said, “Having the AWU come on site has brought significant benefits to employees. Many of us never understood what our entitlements were, and Boris from the AWU took the time to explain them to us.

“The AWU has worked closely with employees and management representatives around safety initiatives and we are all starting to see the benefits of that in our everyday interactions in the workplace. For our first EBA, the parties have developed what many of us consider to be a very good agreement.

“Without the involvement of the AWU, we never would have achieved some of the entitlements we now have.”

Branch Organiser Boris Baraldi said, “From a site that had no union representation, we now have 26 members, and the total number of permanent employees has grown to 35.

“We have achieved 75 per cent union membership in a relatively short space of time, and the AWU remains the only union on site. My objective is to reach 100 per cent membership and we remain confident that the work that the AWU is doing in partnership with company reps will translate to positive outcomes in a number of areas and attract more members as a consequence.”

Retiring South Burnett Regional Council employee, Peter Bygrave.

Nanango joined in the formation of South Burnett Regional Council. Organiser Maree Duffy and the AWU executive wish Peter well in his retirement.
NEWCASTLE

DEVELOPS

A NEW LEADER

In September, Tom Matheson became the AWU Newcastle Branch’s inaugural delegate chosen to attend the week-long leadership program held in the St George Basin on the state’s south coast.

Tom reports having enjoyed an extremely informative and productive five days over the course’s duration.

The AWU Newcastle Branch wishes to thank all involved from the union’s National Office who made this inaugural program such a success and looks forward to sending delegates to future leadership development programs in the years ahead.

VICTORIA

OUR BUSHFIRE FIGHTING HEROES

A group of AWU members has been honoured for its role in saving the lives of 19 campers during the Black Saturday bushfires of February 7, 2009.

Brian Earl, Brian Lawry, Jarrod Smith and Bradley Sexton work for the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment and are named under a Group Bravery Citation from the Australian Bravery Decorations Council. They will also receive individual bravery awards from the Royal Humane Society.

Black Saturday was a day of such shocking devastation, and loss of life and property, that its repercussions will continue for many years to come.

AWU members were involved in many different capacities. Some fought the fires, either as part of their jobs or as volunteers. Some had to leave their homes and ultimately lost them that day, while many more sat back with the rest of the state and tried to comprehend the enormity of the tragedy.

AWU Victorian Secretary Cesar Melhem said, “To those who have been honoured, I offer the congratulations of all AWU members, and I know they have the gratitude of all Victorians.”

NEWCASTLE

HUNTER BOTTLING COMPANY MEMBERS PUT A LID ON UNFAIR PRACTICE

In July, the AWU Newcastle Branch received a call from an employee of Hunter Bottling Company, based in wine country at Pokolbin in the Hunter Valley, requesting a visit.

HBC had a non-unionised highly casual workforce and the employees believed that management was taking full advantage of it. Conditions that had been in place at HBC over many years were being lost and its casual employees wanted to know what they could do to halt this, the caller said.

AWU Newcastle Branch President Tony Callinan and Organiser Paul Delaney made the trip to HBC to discuss the workforce’s issues and propose a solution.

The AWU planned a campaign that combined union education, growth and ultimately a collective agreement on site. The result, less than 15 months later, is that the AWU has 90 per cent union density on site, with clear activists and leaders. A two-year collective agreement, with previous lost conditions now recognised, is locked into the document.

The AWU members from HBC have shown just what can be achieved if individuals are prepared to join the union to form a collective and stand up for what they believe in.

As no agreement was reached initially on the number of jobs to go or the size of the redundancy packages, the AWU returned to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission on September 19.

A series of hearings before the IRC culminated in a job-loss deal and improved redundancy package. The union managed to achieve an improved redundancy package for BlueScope Steel employees, who would get a one-off payment of between $7500 and $12,500, with employees whose service spanned between 15 and 35 years being the major beneficiaries. BlueScope Steel employees with more than 35 years received their redundancy entitlements uncapped, and there were no forced redundancies.

At a mass meeting held on October 6, BlueScope workers voted unanimously to accept the company’s job-loss deal, paving the way for redundancies to begin.

Agreement between the AWU and BlueScope Steel was reached on a majority of issues on November 4.

Andy Gillespie said, “The work of all the branch officials and the delegates to ensure our members were looked after has been extremely important, and I cannot praise them enough for their efforts. “The Branch had to act quickly and decisively in setting the agenda, and with the commitment and involvement of our delegates, we were able to deliver a series of outcomes that provided clarity and reassurance to affected members. “We systematically went through each department within BlueScope and fought for every position. At the same time we were talking with our members employed with contracting firms to identify the impact for them. The negotiations were successful to the point that we have no forced redundancies in any of our production departments, and some workers who had been hoping for a redundancy package will miss out.

“Considering we were facing significant job losses at the beginning of this process, to get that number down to approximately 440 and save over 260 jobs across BlueScope and its contractor companies is an important outcome.

“There is still plenty of work ahead for officials and delegates, as we have to go through all the issues of how BlueScope Steel and contractor companies are going to operate in the years to come.”

Tom Matheson.
VICTORIA

RACING MEMBERS TAKE A STAND

AWU members at Caulfield and Moonee Valley racecourses this year planned industrial action that could have stopped major events in the Spring Racing Carnival.

Moonee Valley Racing Club chief executive Michael Browell had escalated its dispute with the union when he threatened workers’ future work prospects, and those of their families and friends if they did not sign the enterprise agreement they were being offered.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem described Browell’s threats as “disgraceful”, and said members had accepted his subsequent apology.

“It was a shock and a disappointment when the CEO made his statements to a meeting of our members, which we had anticipated would be to announce an improved offer,” Cesar said. “They were absolutely shell-shocked by what they heard. It only served to strengthen their resolve to exercise their legal right to take protected industrial action.”

Following Browell’s apology and subsequent submission to members’ demands, the members accepted average annual increases of 4.5 per cent, compounding, and the action did not go ahead as planned on Cox Plate day.

The Moonee Valley fiasco followed members’ notification of protected action at Caulfield on the day of the Caulfield Guineas meeting two weeks earlier. This was also the day when champion sprinter Black Caviar – the mare rated as the best thoroughbred in the world – was due to race after not having been seen in action since a win at Doomben in May.

But, with less than two days to go, it looked as if the races may have had to be cancelled as a result of bans, including the moving of the rail and stoppages.

AWU Racing Organiser John-Paul Blandthorn said the sticking points related to the size of the annual increases, and the fact that those increases were to be non-compounding.

This meant that each year, for the 47 AWU members at Caulfield Racecourse employed on track and maintenance work, the increase would be calculated on the rate in force when the agreement started. This was contrary to practice for every other worker employed by the Melbourne Racing Club.

“Our members work very hard all year, and take tremendous pride in what they do. They look forward to the big race days just like the rest of the racing fraternity, so the industrial action was very much a last resort for them,” John-Paul said.

Last-minute negotiations, late into the night two days before the Saturday meeting, however, produced a new offer of annual increases of 4.5 per cent, compounding over the three-year life of the agreement.

The Victoria Racing Club, which controls Flemington, where the Melbourne Cup is run, has also reached an in-principle agreement for its AWU members.

VICTORIA

BRANCH BALL SHINES BRIGHT... AGAIN!

The AWU Victorian Branch’s Annual Ball is firmly established as one of the high spots of the year for delegates, HSRs and anyone else lucky enough to score an invitation.

What started 13 years ago as a relatively simple, but thoroughly enjoyable affair at San Remo Ballroom in North Carlton, has evolved into a glamorous night at Melbourne’s Crown Casino.

This year, the target was to keep numbers down to 950 delegates, HSRs and partners, which proved something of a challenge, given the popularity of the event.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said the ball would be a fixture on the union’s calendar for many years to come.

“It is just a wonderful night when the people who really are the heart and soul of the union get together to celebrate the year that has gone by, and it’s our chance to say thank you to our delegates and HSRs for the wonderful work they do throughout the year for our members,” he said. “Some people reschedule their lives to make sure they can come.”

This year, the master of ceremonies was radio and television presenter John Blackman, with comedian Dave Hughes also appearing.

Cesar said, “We have a very serious rule that there are as few speeches as we can get away with, and an emphasis on a happy and harmonious night.”

AWU Events Co-ordinator Claire Raimondo is to be acclaimed once again for performing the near-miracle of getting most people seated where they wanted to be, and still managing to come through it all smiling.
The AWU Victorian Branch is working hard to avoid a repeat of the West Gate Bridge strengthening project that saw the state’s construction unions in a long and ugly demarcation battle.

This time around, the Regional Rail Link (RRL) is at issue, and once again the AWU has acted within its rules to cover members involved in these civil works.

Unfortunately, the CFMEU has again chosen to attempt to push the AWU out of its rightful place on the project, amid claims the AWU has negotiated a poor deal for its members.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said enterprise agreements negotiated for the RRL bettered the CFMEU’s agreements in almost every respect.

“We have negotiated excellent agreements, the first of which has already been certified,” Cesar said.

“For reasons known best to themselves, the CFMEU has been pumping out ridiculous claims that the EAs ‘sell out’ our members. It is ludicrous, particularly considering they are superior agreements.

He said, “The AWU is acting within its rules and constitution, and I expect the CFMEU to do the same. We have offered the CFMEU to be party to these arrangements if they agree to a demarcation provision in line with this rule, but they were not interested.”

AWU EAs have better wages, super, travel and site allowances and redundancy provisions than the CFMEU’s agreement.

Work on the $4.3 billion project is expected to start in earnest in the next few weeks. When complete, it will separate regional trains from metropolitan trains – for the first time, giving Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat their own dedicated tracks through the suburban system, thereby increasing capacity and reliability.

The Victorian Coalition Premier Ted Baillieu has promised to “get tough” with construction unions on major projects. The CFMEU’s efforts at disruption came at a time when it was more important than ever for unions to be speaking with one voice.

“Unions need to remember who and what they should be fighting, and stop squabbling amongst themselves. It is not the best way to represent the working men and women who put their trust in us,” Cesar said.

“It is playing into the state government’s hands to start the chest-thumping all over again. The AWU has a lawful and rightful place in civil construction in Victoria, and intends to stay there.”
Members of the AWU employed at the Barossa Council have achieved a landmark victory in their fight for a new enterprise agreement.

The council encompasses the renowned SA wine region of the Barossa Valley, traditionally “blue-ribbon” Liberal territory, and not union-friendly.

The current enterprise agreement expired on June 16, with meetings of members being held to formulate a log of claims. The major concerns of members centred on cost-of-living pressures and job-security fears caused by the council’s increasing use of contractors.

Accordingly, a claim was presented to council with the primary concerns being the attainment of a 15 per cent wage increase over three years, call-out provisions as per the award as claimed, improvements to the cutting of double-time back to 10 hours and a no-forced-redundancy clause.

Job Delegate Dennis White said, “Despite being advised that the wage offer was not acceptable, the council insisted on the offer being put to a ballot of the workforce. The union recommended a ‘no’ vote, and accordingly, the package was rejected decisively.”

In response to this outcome, council withdrew all matters it had agreed to and directed that a 4 per cent wage increase take effect from the next pay period, backdated to June, and that the old EBA would operate until such time as the union agreed to the package presented.

In what was a first and unthinkable course of events in the history of council unionism in the Barossa Valley, AWU members, who comprise 95 per cent of the total outside workforce of 34, voted unanimously to take industrial action.

On the morning of September 20, a scheduled council meeting day, a protest stop-work meeting was held at the front of the council offices with representatives of the local media present. A number of elected councillors approached, wanting information as to the reasons for the stoppage as, despite what the union was told to the contrary by management, they had no idea that a dispute existed.

This action generated much public interest, Dennis said, “But it also raised concern on the part of the elected councillors that an industrial dispute was occurring, and a strong determination of the members to ensure that the dispute would continue until a satisfactory outcome was achieved.

At a meeting of all outside staff held the next day, council management declared its position would remain unchanged, no improved offer would be forthcoming and anyone who did not like it was free to look for alternative work elsewhere.”

Throughout the dispute, Dennis was supported by the, “strong leadership and experience” of South Australian Branch Assistant Secretary Frank Mateos.

In response, the council offered a 10.5 per cent wage increase over three years and a rejection of all other matters presented by the union. A subsequent series of negotiations resulted in an improved wage offer to 12 per cent over three years, call-out provisions as per the award as claimed, improvements to the cutting of double-time back to 10 hours and a no-forced-redundancy clause.

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AWU BEGINS A NEW CHAPTER IN NORTHERN TASMANIA

The opening of an AWU office in George Town, northern Tasmania, on October 24 marks the beginning of a new era in the union's 125-year history of supporting the people of regional Australia.

“Our union started in regional Australia, representing shearsers and mine workers. Today, still – unlike any other union in Australia – most AWU members and their families live and work outside of the big capital cities,” AWU National Secretary Paul Howes said at the office opening.

AWU Tasmanian Branch Secretary Ian Wakefield said the union's aim was that (together with workers) it would work to protect the community, local industry and local jobs. The AWU in Tasmania will have full-time officials in the north and north-west, he said, to ensure it can be more responsive to the needs of local workers.

“Our long history, and community involvement, has given the Australian Workers' Union and its members an expansive and enviable network, which can help local industry amplify its voice, to ensure local concerns are heard in the corridors of power,” he said. “Now we've opened our George Town office, I am hoping that the community will use it to find ways to work together to protect the local community, local industry and local jobs.”

Paul Howes said the AWU prided itself on being a strong voice for regional and rural Australia.

“We believe in building co-operative relationships to keep the regions alive, to support the growth of regional industry,” he said. “After all, good local jobs allow our members, and their families, to continue to live the good life – well away from the overcrowded capital cities.”

Paul said the Union was not prepared to stand back and see people ripped-off just because they do not live in big population centres.

“And, if our members are treated decently, treated with respect, paid properly, that will be an important economic input into the local economy. After all, our members live locally and spend locally – helping local business to thrive, and to thereby employ more local people,” he said.

AWU WINNING AGAINST WOODSIDE

The AWU has never been afraid to tackle the issues that affect our members’ working lives.

The AWU has also never been afraid to tackle the large resource corporations like Rio Tinto at Bell Bay in Tasmanian and BHP Billiton at Olympic Dam in South Australia, but in the West there is a another period. After seeing AWU members across Woodside’s various operations, both on and offshore.

After a successful campaign at the Karratha Gas Plant (KGP) early in 2011 the AWU has established high levels of union membership that have since forced Woodside to bargain for an enterprise agreement, which is one of the few that are being formulated in the North West Pilbara Region of WA since the aggressive de-unionisation in the 1990s.

From humble beginnings, the successes at the KGP campaign have flowed onto Woodside’s offshore hydrocarbons operations, firstly with Woodside’s new Floating Production Storage and Off-take facility (FPSO) the OKHA and now onto the Northern Endeavour FPSO.

After seeing AWU members at the KGP fight to be heard and have a say in their employment conditions, AWU members on the OKHA were forced to show majority support for an AWU collective agreement, which was successfully done with support from the AWU-MUA Offshore Alliance. After seeing the great successes on the other two Woodside operations and after being locked into a five-year, non-union Workchoices Agreement we are seeing rapid membership growth on the Northern Endeavour. We now have three Woodside operations currently in nominal bargaining periods.

AWU West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price said that the show of support from members at Woodside has been amazing to see and he has been proud to oversee not only the growth of AWU membership in this area but also the dispelling of a common myth about high-paid workers and trade unions;

“Some believe in the myth that if you earn over a certain amount then you don’t need unions or you are above that level of industrial participation. During our discussion with AWU members at Woodside, it’s all been about conditions and having a say over the policies and practices than they work under – money was not the issue.”

AWU delegates have worked tirelessly with members to ensure that the outcomes that we have been fighting for are achieved. Stay tuned for further updates about the AWU’s progress with Woodside.
AROC AND ROLL!

The AWU West Australian Branch had the pleasure of hosting the biannual AWU Oil Conference in November, which coincided with the biannual AROC (Australasian Refineries Operators Committee) delegates’ meeting, hosted by the site delegates from the Kwinana BP Refinery.

The AROC aims and objectives are quite simple: “to further enhance the working conditions, pay and work related issues that affect oil workers and workers in the Australasian area, through trade union, social activities and by democratic means.”

Since 1994 this organisation, established by proactive union members, has been one of the most successful bodies representing refinery workers. Senior site delegates from the key oil and gas refining, chemical plants, offshore operations unions, travel from their respective refineries to be part of the AROC representation. Their role gives the organisation its strength as it is not being run by one union – but delegates from a number of different unions at a number of refineries right across Australia and New Zealand.

WA Branch Secretary Stephen Price said it had been a pleasure to be part of the AROC meetings this year. “It’s a fantastic organisation. It is truly a testament to all of the hard work, dedication and love of the industry they bring that sees the successful outcomes that the AROC group produces.”

WA Branch Secretary Stephen Price thanked all of the AWU officials involved who gave up their weekends and attended the event – and it was another successful campaign for the WA Branch.

“After the AWU’s great successes at May Day and functions and events in places such as the Goldfields, the Albany regional visit gave the wider community greater understanding of the work the AWU does for its members and how we can improve the conditions and safety of local workplaces,” Stephen said. “It also shows that the AWU is alive and well in regional Western Australia and getting bigger by the day.”

AWU – CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF UNITY

As part of the Australian Workers’ Union 125th year celebrations the West Australian Branch has been holding a number of regional events and trips to celebrate this great milestone with our members – so it was Albany’s and the Great Southern turn recently!

There were several major events that coincided with the weekend to make it a great experience for AWU members in the region. The Albany Agricultural show stretched across the November 11 and 12 which saw nearly 30,000 locals from the Albany and Great Southern Region enjoy two days of farm displays, rides and entertainment – including the wood chopping and local shearing trials.

The AWU had a number of organisers out in force, including West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price handing out a number of gifts for kids from our partner sponsors at Australian Super, ME Bank and CBus. Later that evening the AWU held a members’ drinks evening and catch-up at one of Albany’s fine local establishments, which was well attended. Over the course of the weekend a number of organisers held site visits to CBH Grain Depots and terminals to coincide with the annual grain harvest – as well as a local shearer’s meeting in Narrikup chaired by AWU Victorian Pastoral Organiser Sam Beechy – a former shearer himself (and we hear not a bad one at that).

The weekend also coincided with the WA Labor Country Conference, which saw the AWU represent the interests of AWU working families in the region.

Overall a very successful weekend with many potential opportunities identified for the AWU to follow up on in the Great Southern Region in the areas such as timber, grain harvesting and farm work.

West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price thanked all of the AWU officials involved who gave up their weekends and attended the event – and it was another successful campaign for the WA Branch. “After the AWU’s great successes at May Day and functions and events in places such as the Goldfields, the Albany regional visit gave the wider community greater understanding of the work the AWU does for its members and how we can improve the conditions and safety of local workplaces,” Stephen said. “It also shows that the AWU is alive and well in regional Western Australia and getting bigger by the day.”
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ROCKHAMPTON DELEGATE

MICK CURRAN

My grandfather, father, brother and I, not to mention various cousins and uncles, have all worked at the meatworks in Rockhampton during our lives. In fact, up until 1997 when my brother left, there had been a Curran working at the abattoirs since 1910 when my grandad started there.

I’m 47 now and grew up knowing the importance of being in a union because my family have always been members.

Apart from teaching me the value of unionism, my dad used to say “always spend last month’s pay not this month’s”, which was very good advice.

When I was working at the meatworks as a young bloke they brought in new managers, AMH, who went through the place “rationalising” everything and they ended up sacking 150 workers, including me.

I then went to work at the other meatworks in Rocky, and the same thing eventually happened there, with a real us-and-them mentality prevailing on the part of the management. During this time I really understood the need to be in the union. The industrial method of dealing with the problems was by strikes and we were eventually locked out and lost our jobs.

After leaving there I went to work as a cellarman/groundsman at Frenchville Sports Club. It was at that time I joined the AWU and I’ve been a member now for 14 years.

The management at Frenchville was not so confrontational, but someone needed to be spokesperson for the workers and that was me.

Eventually the same management rationalisation thing happened, so I left there and went to work as gardener at Rockhampton Regional Council, where I still work.

I love my work and when an AWU delegate’s position came up at the council, I jumped at the chance to do it.

We have just finished negotiating an EBA with the council and we had a good outcome and got a lot of the things we set out to get. But we have had a couple of battles along the way. We had a few rallies, but we did them on our time. Sometimes you can play the strike card too early. You have to be smart about how you go about making your intentions known and being taken seriously.

We followed through with things we said we were going to do so the council took us seriously.

My partner’s name is Raeleen and we met when we were 17, both Rocky born and bred. Our two kids are both very well aware of the values of being in a union because they’ve been brought up with it. Every year we take them to the Labour Day picnic in Rockhampton and to the march on Anzac Day.

My daughter, Rosalie, is 18 and just finished her HSC. She is applying to do a graphic design course. When she was at school she did a project asking the other kids what they knew about unions. She decided to do this topic on her own, no prompting from me.

It was amazing what these kids didn’t know about unionism. They’d never heard of the Eureka Stockade, but it’s part of our history. I think it’s the parents… they don’t tell them anything about the importance of solidarity. Maybe they think it’s not relevant to them either.

Kids at school get taught about the importance of their health and their future careers and such, but not a thing about unions. I think this should be part of the education system. Anyway, Rosalie’s project must have struck a chord with the teachers because she got an A for it.

My son Josh is 13 and just started high school. He’s a keen soccer player and I’ve been coaching him since he was six years old. So I’m just as keen.

I’m also a self-confessed petrol-head and a mad keen Ford car enthusiast. I’m not willing to disclose how many cars I currently have, but they include two XW GT Falcons and a very rare 1967 XR, windowless panel van.

I am a member of the Australian National Drag Racing Association and compete in their circuit, driving an ‘83 Falcon that is the only one of my cars that is in very “schmick nick”. I finished seventh in the 2009/2010 “Super Street” in that car.

The car is red and on the bonnet is a very large “Your Rights at Work” sticker from the campaign we had when John Howard was in power. I also have a Eureka flag where the front number plate goes.

I’ve seen American Graffiti a dozen or more times, one of my favourite movies.

Being in the The Australian Worker is on my bucket list, so I can now cross that one off. One of the other things on the list is being on the front page of Drag Star magazine, so I’ll have to keep working on that one!

Being a union delegate is one of the most important things in my life and it’s easy to do if you believe in it. I’ve seen blokes in the union who talk the talk but they don’t walk the walk and after a while you can see through the bull***t.

“Our two kids are both very well aware of the values of being in a union because they’ve been brought up with it.”
TONY CALINNAN

My father and his father before him were both coal miners in Newcastle and Dad was a Union member for his whole working life.

Growing up, I remember Dad telling stories about camping on the beach, sometimes for weeks on end, while Pop was on strike. Apparently in those days there was a ready supply of fish to catch to keep the family fed.

I can also remember Dad being on strike as I was growing up, so from an early age I grew up with an understanding of standing up for what you believed in and fighting for a fair go.

Dad’s involvement in the union movement is more than likely why I joined the AWU when I started my first job. But I also now realise that a lot of the values I hold that lead me to become a union organiser came from my mother.

Mum was a housewife, but she was very active in the community. She was always helping people, organising events to raise money for charity, working on the school P&C committee and always involved with the local junior soccer club. Mum was a great organiser, whenever there was something to be done, she would rally people together and make it happen.

When I finished school I did an apprenticeship with BHP as a fitter and turner at Newcastle steelworks. In those days BHP started in excess of 100 apprentices each year but when I completed my apprenticeship I was retrenched along with almost all of the other apprentices in my year.

I ended up working for a maintenance contractor and it was at this time that I became aware of the major differences in the wages and conditions between the unionised BHP workforce and the non-unionised contractors. As a result I set about unionising my workplace and ended up becoming an AWU delegate. A few years on I was elected as a member of the Newcastle Branch Executive.

I became an organiser in 2005 after a position became vacant in the Newcastle office and I love it. Being an organiser is the best job and I find it very rewarding.

I became the Newcastle Branch President in October 2010 and currently look after are the construction industry.

The industry that I am most passionate about is the traffic-control industry. Apart from the obvious dangers that traffic controllers face on a daily basis from irresponsible motorists ignoring reduced speed limits at road works, it is a constant battle chasing companies for paying below award wages and, in a lot of cases, not paying superannuation. Companies regularly go into receivership owing employees wages, superannuation and accrued entitlements only to reopen under a new name within weeks.

I’m 38 and married to Tanya who I first met when we were in high school. We weren’t high school sweethearts, but after we left school we ended up together and we have now been happily married for nearly 15 years.

Tanya and I were both born and bred in Newcastle and wouldn’t live anywhere else. We have two boys, Nicholas, 11, and Ben, nine. They are great mates. Nicholas plays rugby league and enjoys riding his scooter while Ben has recently started competing in triathlon and enjoys long-distance running.

The whole family enjoys going camping and hunting on a relative’s property in western NSW. The boys enjoy riding motor bikes and we all enjoy shooting, chasing feral pigs with our two dogs (Dot and Guts) and helping out with the farm work on the property.

“All in the Family:

Tony Calinnan with his wife Tanya and their two boys.
BAGGING THE BULLIES
They might be the stereotypical schoolyard thugs taunting a vulnerable child, or a group of workmates that subtly excludes a colleague from its camaraderie.

In this digital age, they might also be the faceless cyber-nasties who use SMS texting and social networking sites such as Facebook as their vehicles of intimidation. But, wherever and however they operate, one thing is certain. Bullies can cause lasting damage.

Melbourne psychologist Evelyn Field, an expert on bullying and the author of books on the subject, says she often sees the traumatic impact of bullying still evident decades later.

“You may not recall the birthday present you got when you were 21, but you will remember any incidence of bullying,” she says. “It’s like a scar on your skin, it is there forever.”

In this special report, *The Australian Worker* investigates how bullying is affecting the lives of readers and their families. There is some good news – studies suggest that schoolyard bullying is becoming less common, perhaps because of increased awareness of the problem.

The chances are that at some point in your life you or someone you love will encounter a bully. It happens in school playgrounds, in families and in workplaces. Even new technology and communication has entered the fray with an increase in “cyber-bullying”. Melissa Sweet looks at bullies, bullying and how you can regain control of your self-esteem.

Ever since he was a kid, Josh Bornstein has been one for taking on the bullies. Josh, the principal of employment and industrial law at lawyers Maurice Blackburn, says his parents always taught him to stand up for the underdog.

“I recall it being an issue in the schoolyard when kids were being picked on,” he says. “I would get myself in all sorts of trouble trying to assist. Bullying is something I’ve had an issue with for as long as I can remember.”

Josh recently launched a campaign for national legislation to tackle bullying in the workplace. He wants the federal government to consider:

- Introducing new legislation, giving victims the ability to access a court or tribunal quickly to expose bullying at work
- Enabling victims to seek court orders or injunctions for proven cases of bullying
- A national educational campaign to reveal the true costs of workplace bullying

Josh says workplace bullying is not explicitly addressed by any federal law, despite Productivity Commission estimates that it costs the economy between $6 billion and $36 billion a year.

“It is astounding that Australia lacks national legislation to enable victims to take action to stop bullying in its tracks,” he says. “Currently, victims of workplace bullying rely on occupational health and safety or personal injury laws. Invariably, these cases proceed well after employees suffer irreparable harm to their health and career.”

Former schoolteacher Sandra Craig, who manages the Alannah and Madeline Foundation’s National Centre Against Bullying, says, “Over the last 10 years, schools have really lifted their game in tackling bullying. They are increasingly taking this very seriously.”

But, with research showing that 10 per cent of school children in school years four to eight experience cyber-bullying, she adds there is much more that needs to be done.

There is also evidence that more could be done to address workplace bullying.

Some AWU members warn that increased casualisation of the workforce is making it easier for supervisors and bosses to get away with bullying.

Jimmy Baird, an AWU delegate at a construction company, says casuals are particularly vulnerable.

“I’ve seen foremen standing over them, treating them like slaves,” he says. “The stress

CAMPAIGNING FOR NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Josh says he has had enormous public support for his campaign.

Psychologist Evelyn Field says legislation may help but is not a complete solution. It is also important for workplaces to strive to create collaborative rather than adversarial environments, and to promote a culture of talking problems out.

“They also need to understand that happy employees are far more productive; in other words, bullying is bad for business,” she says.

Evelyn says every workplace department and group should sit down and talk regularly.

To support the Maurice Blackburn campaign, visit: facebook.com/SayNoToWorkplaceBullying.

For more information about workplace bullying, contact Maurice Blackburn: 1800 810 856.

Photography: Getty Images

Evelyn Field.
these guys have – they can’t plan anything, they can’t go out and buy a house because of not knowing when they’re going to be pushed to one side.”

Jimmy says workplace bullying can also affect safety. “It brings in bad work practices because these guys are willing to do anything, to break safety rules, to stay in work for their families,” he says. “People are scared to speak.”

SCHOOL BULLYING

When Dr Ken Rigby was working as a teacher in the 1950s, bullying just wasn’t on the radar in schools. “Looking back, I can’t remember a single staff meeting where people raised the issue of bullying,” he says. “Bullying did occur, but there was no proactive work about it.”

Dr Rigby, a University of South Australia academic who has been researching bullying for more than 20 years and has written several books about it, says there has been a huge increase in community awareness.

At the same time, studies of school students in more than 20 countries suggest that bullying in schools has become less common in recent years. “That is terribly important, because the media on the whole says it has been getting worse,” he says. “It isn’t, and that’s worth knowing.”

In other good news, Dr Rigby says anti-bullying programs can reduce the incidence of the problem in schools by as much as 20 per cent. But unfortunately that knowledge has been getting out to a relatively small number of schools.

Many families and schools may not be up to date with the latest evidence about how to manage bullying, he adds. The most popular approaches, including punishing the bully, generally don’t work. “On the whole, that doesn’t help because children have covert ways of continuing the bullying, and they often feel resentment to the victim,” he says.

Bystanders can help by speaking up when they see bullying happening. He says: “Rather than telling children what they should do to help,
it is better to get them to discuss among themselves how they think they could intervene."

Dr Rigby says the most effective tactics involve taking a structured approach to help all of those involved to develop greater empathy and understanding of each others’ feelings.

This means working with the children suspected of bullying, to help them understand the impact upon the victims, as well as working with the victims, including looking at how their behaviour may be inflaming the situation.

"In about 20 per cent of cases, the victim is provocative, so must change their own behaviour as well," Dr Rigby says. "You’ve got to try and develop good relationships between the students, helping the kids to understand the hurt and harm that is done."

Sandra Craig says older children in part-time work are also at risk of bullying in the workplace. "There are lots of negative behaviours in workplaces, and kids have very little knowledge or power to deal with them."

IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED...

Children generally do not tell their parents or teachers if they are being bullied. Dr Rigby says studies have found that only about 30 per cent of the children being bullied at school will tell teachers. Interestingly, he says studies have shown that Australian children are less likely to speak up.

"Children in Australia are more likely to worry about dobbing than in a number of other countries," he says. "We have a culture that you don’t dob."

Sandra says warning signs that a child is being bullied include not wanting to go to school, personality changes, changes in mood or sleeping patterns, becoming withdrawn, or coming home with things broken or missing and unexplained bruises or scratching. She says kids are more likely to tell their friends than their parents. "They’re afraid their parents and teachers are going to make it worse," she says. "If it involves cyber-bullying, they may fear their access to technology will be taken away. I’d say to parents ‘don’t threaten to take that access away.’"

Sandra advises parents to keep the lines of communication open with their children. It’s important that problems are solved before they become entrenched, leading to risk-taking or self-harming behaviours, she adds.

When parents approach schools, Sandra says it is important to remember the school will need time to investigate.

Dr Rigby stresses that parents won’t help by getting angry and telling teachers how to do their jobs. Rather, they need to work together. He suggests involving the child in deciding what to tell the teachers, to stop them feeling that matters are being taken out of their hands. Sometimes, however, parents may just have to act, even if the child is resistant, he says.

WHAT BULLYING IS AND ISN’T

Bullying is when someone (or a group of people) with more power than the victim repeatedly and intentionally uses negative words and/or actions. It can be physical, verbal, covert (for example, spreading rumours behind someone’s back), or involve the use of digital technologies to embarrass someone in public or privately. Bullying does not mean having an argument or disagreement with someone, not liking someone, or single acts of meanness.

Some people bully because they do not understand what they are doing is wrong. Others do it because they’re mimicking behaviour they’ve seen at home.

Many children bully at one time or another as they learn different ways of interacting socially, but stop when it is pointed out to them that they are causing harm.

Often, young people have no particular feeling towards those they bully, but use it as a way to get or keep a social position or power within their group. Some people bully to prevent it happening to them.

Bullying is also associated with bad outcomes for the perpetrators. Young people who repeatedly bully are more likely to be involved in continuing anti-social and criminal behaviour, have issues with substance abuse, have low academic achievement, and abuse their spouse or children later in life.

Source: The Alannah and Madeline Foundation’s National Centre Against Bullying.

WHERE BULLIES RULE

These workers and their workplace cannot be identified in any way, but at one construction site staffed by AWU members, workers regularly experience and witness bullying by a manager. Several members, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told of older workers being victimised to the extent that some had been left in tears.

“The bullying taking place now is causing a lot of mental pressure, and a lot of anxiety is inflicted,” says one worker. "The workplace has increasingly become very dangerous to work in because guys are flustered, anxious, worried and under psychological pressure."

One worker described a manager standing over him so closely that, "he could kiss me if he leaned over."

Another member from the same workplace, who felt he personally had been, “treated like a dog,” said the bullying was contributing to absenteeism. “You just don’t feel like going to work,” he says.

WHAT THE AWU SAYS

As OHS Director for the Victorian Branch of the union, Percy Pillai is regularly contacted by AWU members who are being bullied at work.

He says bullying often arises as a result of managers or supervisors being poorly trained in people-management skills.

"Bullying is more endemic in precarious work, where there are high levels of casualisation and young and vulnerable workers," he says. “It is also associated with discrimination and coercion.”

When contacted by members, the union gathers evidence, meets with managers, and where necessary, provides referral to medical and legal advice.

Percy recommends that members concerned about workplace bullying should contact the union as soon as possible, so that problems can be resolved before becoming entrenched.

“Often it comes to our attention when relationships are so fractured that workers can’t go back to work,” he says.

HELP AND INFORMATION

Kids Helpline: A 24-hour, 7-day-a-week counselling service for young people. 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelp.com.au

The Australian Government’s Cybersmart Program: www.cybersmart.gov.au

Reach Out: Provides information on a range of mental health issues and connects young people through blogs and forums. www.reachout.com.au

Websites with resources for teachers, students and parents

www.bullyingnoway.com.au

www.kenrigby.net

www.bullying.com.au

www.antibullying.net

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“Often it comes to our attention when relationships are so fractured that workers can’t go back to work,” he says.
Cricket has embraced radical change in the last eight years with enthusiasm for the short, sharp Twenty20 version exploding around the world. As Australia revolutionises its domestic competition by introducing the T20 Big Bash League this summer, Gavin Dennett explores the rapid rise of the fast and furious game.
Back in the ‘70s, Australian television was at a crossroads. Commercial networks were becoming increasingly reliant on cheap overseas content and had little incentive to commission Australian productions. In response to a “TV: Make it Australian” campaign lobbying on behalf of local film and television producers, the federal government sought to protect the industry by introducing quotas in 1973 forcing networks to broadcast domestic content. For a young, entrepreneurial Kerry Packer, these changes presented unique opportunities for his flagship Nine Network, after he took control following the death of his father, Sir Frank Packer, in 1974.

With the advent of colour television broadcasts in 1975, Packer sought to increase sport content on the Nine Network, and with the Australian government quota in effect, devised the concept of World Series Cricket. Offering cash incentives to elite cricketers from Australia and abroad, this revolutionary breakaway competition lured many of the game’s stars.

In 1977, the first ball was bowled in World Series Cricket. Despite fierce resistance by the International Cricket Conference (now known as the International Cricket Council, or ICC) and protracted legal wrangling, by 1979, the competition had made inroads into the hearts of Australian cricket fans. Giving the public a glitzy, exciting version of a traditional game, one-day limited-overs cricket played under lights, in coloured uniforms, proved popular.

Fast-forward two decades to the start of the new millennium and World Series Cricket’s day-night, 50-over games had become fixtures on the domestic and international calendar. A generation of fans had not known life without the “pyjama game”.

But, like Australian TV in the early ‘70s – and cricket later that decade – the game was at a crossroads. One-day cricket had been coasting as the golden goose during the 1980s and early ’90s, but there was a consensus that interest in the format was waning. It still performed strongly as an international contest, but in domestic markets, such as England’s, one-day cricket had lost its appeal.

**GAME CHANGES**

Seeking ways to bring people back through the gates, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) researched the reasons for the decline in interest and concluded it needed to provide an alternative for fans who were cash-rich and time-poor.

In 2001, ECB marketing manager Stuart Robertson proposed the concept of fast-paced, quick-fix, 20-over cricket to reel in fans at domestic games, while also reaching out to a brand new audience. As it had previously been played at amateur level in England and Wales, the concept was not entirely new. But, at a professional level, it was radical.

Unsurprisingly, Robertson’s suggestions were met with disdain and opposition from cricket traditionalists. But, like Packer almost 25 years earlier, Robertson and his team had a collective vision and stayed true to something they knew could work. Nonetheless, persuading the counties to vote in favour of its introduction was the greatest challenge.

After intense lobbying, the initiative went to a vote, and, fortunately, the result came in 11–7 in favour of introducing the new game. The challenge was then to come up with a catchy name. Many variations, including Cricket Lite, were thrown around, but support from media groups ensured the Twenty20 title was settled in 2002. In 2003, the first Twenty20 fixture was played at the Rose Bowl in Southampton as Hampshire hosted Sussex. There was to be no turning back.

Crowds embraced the new game that was played at a fast pace, featured big-hitting, and produced a carnival atmosphere. Domestic players also welcomed it as it gave them the opportunity to play in front of big crowds with a level of hype they had never encountered before. While the comp was still dismissed as a gimmick in many quarters, the public was voting for Twenty20 cricket with its feet. Robertson had created a monster, and soon international cricket wanted a piece of the action.

Despite English origins, the first Twenty20 international was played in February 2005 between New Zealand and Australia at Eden Park in Auckland in a party atmosphere, and the Kiwis harked back to one-day cricket’s glory years by donning retro uniforms and sporting afros, moustaches and terry-towelling hats. The game had arrived on the big stage, but was still considered a joke by many, and considering the tight brown New Zealand shirts on display, even by those taking part. Australia appeared to take the game more seriously, romping to a 44-run win.

In January 2005, Australia’s first domestic Twenty20 fixture was played between the Western Warriors and Victorian Bushrangers at the WACA. Despite being just an exhibition game, over 20,000 people turned up.

The following summer, the Twenty20 Big Bash competition between the six Australian cricket states of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia launched, and, again, the crowds flocked through the gates.

By 2007, there was a worldwide groundswell for this new and exciting game, and multinational corporations were looking to throw money at it as it was promoted to new audiences, many of whom had not been targeted by the cricket fraternity in the past.

Wanting to strike while the iron was hot,
the ICC introduced the World Twenty20 tournament that featured the top 12 cricketing nations. The inaugural tournament, held in South Africa, was a raging success. Most importantly, it was won by India.

As the biggest cricket television market in the world, India generates up to 80 per cent of worldwide revenue for the game. It initially opposed Twenty20, but the national euphoria resulting from winning the world title changed its view of the game, and it then embraced it wholeheartedly, much to the relief of the ICC.

In 2008, billions of dollars were invested in the Indian Premier League, generating worldwide buzz and attracting elite stars seeking to cash in on the phenomenal salaries generated by a high-profile player auction. This competition significantly raised the bar for what players could earn, thus changing the face of the sport. Twenty20 had not only been accepted, but was threatening to obliterate more recognised forms of cricket.

TWENTY20 VISION

Players embraced the format. Some, such as Shaun Tait, even retired from Test and one-day cricket to focus on Twenty20 – and while the ICC revelled in its new revenue, it had still to overcome the purists’ perception that the game was just a gimmick for sloggers.

Yet, as Twenty20 has evolved over the last three years, and as the best players hone their skills in it, it has become increasingly legitimised. Elite batsmen are no longer being reduced to looking like park cricketers wildly swinging at every delivery, teams’ innings are better-paced, tactics are being refined, new strokes have emerged, and slow bowlers have become important attacking weapons, dispelling initial fears that spinners would be belted out of the game.

Also of significance to the ICC and traditionalists, Twenty20 has helped Test cricket with its new array of strokes and aggressive attitudes to scoring runs rubbing off and improving the longest version of the game.

With the success of the Twenty20 Big Bash in Australia over the last six seasons, the time has come to push at new frontiers, and thus the T20 Big Bash League has been born. Commencing on December 16, the new competition is scrapping the state allegiances in favour of eight city-based franchises. The new teams are the Sydney Sixers, Sydney Thunder, Melbourne Stars, Melbourne Renegades, Brisbane Heat, Hobart Hurricanes, Adelaide Strikers and Perth Scorchers. Traditional strips have gone, with the likes of the Sixers wearing pink and Heat wearing teal, and the city teams are hoping to attract a tribal following in the same way Australian football codes have.

The short, sharp version of the game has allowed retired first-class cricketers such as Shane Warne and Matthew Hayden to continue playing, and both superstars will feature in the T20 Big Bash League, for the Stars and Heat respectively. They will be joined by a host of international big names, such as Chris Gayle, Brendon McCullum and Daniel Vettori. The signing of Warne has been a coup, as he will be the face of the competition as it boldly moves forth into uncharted territory for the game in Australia.

Kerry Packer, media mogul and instigator of the World Series Cricket in 1977, where Test cricketers were contracted for a knock-out series of one day matches with all television rights held by Channel 9.
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WHO AM I?

Our pals Bindi and Ringer have made some great new friends from all over Australia, read the clues to work out who they are! If you get stuck, perhaps your Mum or Dad can help you out.

1. I’m a marsupial mammal who loves to hop! I’m the largest of my species and I can stand over two metres tall.

2. I’m the largest herbivorous burrowing mammal in the world! I may look slow and stumpy with my short legs, but I can run 40km/h.

3. I’m cute and cuddly and when I’m not having a nap, I love to munch on eucalyptus leaves!

4. I’m on Australia’s coat of arms, I can run really fast and have soft feathers, but can’t fly! I peck at my favourite seeds, berries, shoots and insects.

5. I’m usually brown, but I’m also known to have patterns, speckles and bands on my scales. I’m very dangerous, as I slither along on my belly, because I’m extremely venomous!

6. I’m golden, reddish or brown. I’m a pure breed so I don’t bark, I only howl, growl and whine. I’m also known as a Warrigal.

7. I rest in my burrow on the water bank during the day because I’m mainly active at night. I am a great swimmer and I spend most of my time in the water. I close my nostrils, eyes and ears to stop water from entering them when I drive into the water. You can also find me on a 20 cent coin!

8. I eat ants, termites, grubs and worms with my long, sticky tongue. I have spikes all over me to protect me from hungry predators!

9. I live in Northern Australia, when I get scared I spread my neck out like a frill and how my teeth! That usually scares my predators away!

10. Usually found in trees, I look like a miniature possum. I can glide through the trees like I’m flying – but I don’t have wings!

Send your name, address and birthday, along with your Mum or Dad’s union membership number, to The Australian Worker, ACP Magazines, Level 14, 66-68 Goulburn Street, Sydney 2000 and when your birthday comes around, you’ll receive a surprise!

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The Australian Workers’ Union takes the views of members seriously. We are conducting a national survey to give all members the opportunity to provide feedback and information about your job, your industry, your Union and work-related issues that are important to you. The results will help the AWU better plan and represent all members. Please help us help you by completing this survey and encouraging your workmates to do the same.

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