

888

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THE ANNUAL JOURNAL OF VICTORIAN TRADES HALL COUNCIL



We Are Union

We stand united as part of a great movement of workers. Our diversity is our strength. Our solidarity is our power. We respect and take care of each other. Prejudice and discrimination including misogyny, racism, homophobia and all other hatreds have no place in our movement. We rise together. Today and every day we commit ourselves to achieving justice, fairness, equality and dignity for all workers. Solidarity Forever.



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The sun is shining comrades. It is time to make some hay.

The year ahead will be full of challenges and opportunities - first and foremost being the cost of living crisis pinching union families. Workers in Australia are becoming accutely aware of the unjust profit:wages share in their workplaces - and they are increasingly voicing their disgust at the greed of businesses who deny their workforce a liveable wage. Union campaigns are the only way we will raise collective consciousness to make change.

Workers can also look to multi-employer bargaining with anticipation. There is great potential to lift wages and conditions - and to build industry-wide solidarity - by negotiating multi-employer bargaining agreements. Our movement is poised to take advantage of this opportunity.

Victorian unions are also advocating for an expansion of the Andrews Government's sick pay guarantee to casual workers in new industries. As reported in this issue, the initial rollout of the scheme has benefited thousands of workers at minimal cost. Once again, Victoria is in fine form as the progressive ideas laboratory of Australia.

Union activists will also be lending our clear eyes and full hearts to the campaign for a First Nations Voice to Parliament. The "Unions for Yes" campaign represents an important opportunity for the union movement - an opportunity to "chew gum and walk", so to speak.



LOOKIN



Racial justice and first-nations justice is indivisible from economic justice, and not just because some of our members are first nations people.

The success of the labour movement depends on the unity of the working class. While our first nations brothers and sisters are denied sovereignty - denied a voice over the issues that affect them - then the voice of the working class is diminished.

As unionists we insist upon the principle that every worker should have a say over the conditions of their employment and the policies under which they live. "Nothing about us without us" - no exceptions. Where politicians of any persuasion can get away with imposing policy on a community without consultation, it is in the interests of the working class to change the system. That is true whether the community is welfare recipients, public housing tenants, or Aboriginal people.

Some fantastic Murri comrades summed it up in the 60s - "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together".

Our solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comrades is not charity. It is the struggle of the working class.

We rise together.

Luke Hilakari,
Secretary Victorian Trades Hall Council

ING FORWARD

Exploitation of apprentices must end.

Ban Bad Bosses

In June 2022 a transport company was fined just \$600,000 for the death of a trainee welder under their care. Apprentice welder Dillon Wu suffocated in a tanker just 10 days after starting a work placement.

Another apprentice had refused to work on the site a few days earlier, citing extreme safety concerns. A WorkSafe inspector had been onsite to check on another hazard less than an hour before Dillon died. Dillon's colleagues spoke of their frustration at the company's refusal to heed workers' safety concerns.

Dillon died in October 2018 - while Victorian unions were actively campaigning for the introduction of the Workplace Manslaughter laws which came into effect in July 2020. Apprentices are now also campaigning for change in how apprenticeships operate in Victoria.

Apprentices are being put at risk and are dropping out of their apprenticeships because of the lax regulation governing who can hire an apprentice in Victoria.

There are nearly 90,000 people in Victoria in training at any given time. With only 47% of all apprentices finishing their apprentices - and the majority saying it's

due to how they're treated by their bosses - we know that employers' behaviour towards apprentices is a huge problem.

Ahead of the State Election, apprentices pressured the Andrews Labor Government to address the problems in the apprenticeship system.





"Apprenticeships can be like the Wild West, with cowboy operators using and abusing apprentices, stealing their wages, and denying them proper training."

Young Workers Centre Director Felicity Sowerbutts explains: "We want the State Government to close the gaps in legislation and create a stronger regulatory system. It must have oversight over all workplaces, capacity for spot checks of workplaces where apprentices are engaged, and importantly, introduce circumstances under which an employer is no longer considered a fit and proper person to employ an apprentice."

"Apprenticeships can be like the Wild West, with cowboy operators using and abusing apprentices, stealing their wages, and denying them proper training. After these cowboys drive one apprentice away from the industry, they can sign up to get another one the very next year! That just shouldn't be happening".

"Effectively, we want to be able to ban bad bosses from cycling through apprentices".

Change on the way

In November the Andrews Government announced the establishment of the **Apprenticeships Taskforce**, which will improve regulation and oversight, simplify complaint reporting, increase employer accountability and establish more rigorous bans on employers who have mistreated apprentices.

"Apprenticeship reform is long overdue and we are thrilled with the Andrews Government's commitment to establish the Apprenticeships Taskforce. said VTHC Assistant Secretary Amanda Threlfall.

"This is about protecting and supporting the apprentices themselves, future-proofing the economy and shoring up a strong quality of life for the whole community.

"A successful apprenticeship system will mean we have sufficient and highly trained tradespeople graduating and able to meet industry demands in the future."

Chemical Compensation

At the beginning of 2019, Sarah*, a commercial cleaner, began experiencing unusual symptoms like back pain, lethargy, headaches.

In August 2019, worsening symptoms led to Sarah being admitted to hospital under the care of a haematologist. Further tests revealed she was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma.

In July 2020, Sarah's son contacted Maurice Blackburn to get some advice.

Research showed there was a link between her chemical exposure at work and her diagnosis, a fact which was supported by Sarah's doctor.

Being able to demonstrate the link between her work and her illness, we knew Sarah

could be eligible for compensation, ensuring she could focus on her health and recovery.

Maurice Blackburn managed to fast track her claim and quickly received the decision that Sarah was given a 'whole person impairment' of 95%, which meant she would receive the statutory maximum in compensation, ~\$640,000.

Although the money could not change Sarah's diagnosis but to be able to tell her she had a financial safety net meant so much to her.

Maurice Blackburn Lawyers will always go above and beyond for our clients, and truly care deeply about their situations. You can read more about workplace diseases and compensation on our website, or give us a call on 1800 111 222. We take calls 24/7.

* Not member's real name

Sarah's case demonstrates the importance of persevering with a tricky case, and how working with a client's healthcare team can make all the difference.

Maurice
Blackburn
Lawyers
Since 1919

**WE
FIGHT
FOR
FAIR®**



INJURED WORKERS GET A UNION ASSIST

For many workers, navigating workers compensation is a traumatic experience. But each year hundreds of union members with workplace injuries are assisted in their compensation claims by the team at Union Assist, whose experience with and knowledge of the compensation system is second to none.

In 2022 the team assisted (coincidentally) two thousand and twenty two workers, referred by their unions, and assisted in 1386 conciliations with a satisfaction rate of 98.03% (you can't please everyone).

Their reputation is due to their tenacity as workers representatives, going up against employers and their large legal teams (and consistently showing them up).

Take the case of Estelle*, who sustained a wrist injury in the course of her care work. The injury left Estelle incapacitated, and she had successfully claimed weekly payments and medical expenses through WorkSafe.

Estelle's employer, however, angrily emailed the WorkSafe agent who accepted Estelle's claim seeking a termination, demanding a new claims manager and insisting upon (another) Independent Medical Examination. Estelle had been examined on two previous occasions by an IME rheumatologist.

As so often happens, the employer cherry-picked a hostile IME who did not specialise in Estelle's injury. The Worksafe Agent provided a letter of instruction to the IME, with the employer's version of events, including that the worker was about to receive a final warning and would be terminated.

Estelle, being a non-English speaker, was supposed to be provided with an interpreter for this and previous examinations, but none was provided. Estelle's payments were terminated.

At conciliation, worker representatives from Union Assist advocated for Estelle. Conciliation did not resolve the dispute.

So off to the Workers Compensation Internal Review Service, where Estelle and her reps were able to show that the Worksafe Agent had effectively been cajoled into terminating the claim. WCIRS advised the Worksafe Agent to overturn the termination of payments.

After months of waiting (and an eventual Workers Injury Commission dispute) Estelle finally received a full year's worth of her weekly payments - with interest - in September 2022.

Such long-running and complex disputes are typical of the cases that come across the Union Assist desk. Workers in Union fund this invaluable service and expertise collectively for the benefit of workers like Estelle and the other 2021 injured workers who have to fight for fair injury compensation.

* Not member's real name

LET SURVIVORS SPEAK

If we are to end workplace sexual harassment, we need to end the misuse of NDAs.

Gathering in Solidarity Hall for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, activist women from different industries discuss their experiences - as lawyers, IOs and survivors - of Non-Disclosure Agreements. By the end of the evening, there is consensus that they should be banned.

Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) are commonly used in the settlement of workplace sexual harassment cases. NDAs enable harassers to continue with impunity and allow employers to hide health and safety risks from their employees. It's not good enough.

Beaming in from Canada to address the meeting, Dr. Julie Macfarlane, co-founder of the global Can't Buy My Silence campaign to ban NDAs, spoke about efforts to limit NDAs in Canada and Britain.

Sascha Peldova-McClelland, Senior Legal and Industrial Officer at the ACTU, described her despair during the global "Me Too" protests, knowing that Australian women who had settled harassment claims were legally barred from sharing their stories. She described how NDAs are so normalised in the legal profession that a judge once chastised her for trying to make alternative provisions for her client.

Liberty Sanger is a Principal at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers. She echoed Sascha's sentiment, and described how despite a formal plea from the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner

for employers to (temporarily) waive confidentiality obligations, only 30 employers nationwide agreed to let women speak of their experience.

VTHC Assistant Secretary Wil Stracke puts it plainly. "We need to ban all non-disclosure agreements in cases of workplace sexual harassment and discrimination, other than those requested by victim-survivors to protect their own confidentiality. We need to end the silence."

So in 2023, union women will campaign to change the status quo.

The campaign is not without its complexities - some legal advocates voice concerns that winning compensation for victims will be more difficult without the "carrot" of confidentiality on the table.

But conversely, deprived of the easy public-relations solution of an NDA, employers might find themselves more motivated by the "stick" of public shaming. Transparency about the prevalence of gendered violence in corporate Australia - and how these hazards are being dealt with - will empower women workers to exercise choice in which companies to consider as employers.

It's well past time to hold corporate Australia accountable for sweeping gendered violence under the rug.



Proof in the pie



Just before Christmas, the workers who make mince pies went on strike. Demonstrating community support with a Megaphone petition assisted the workers to win.

Pampas workers had to hit the grass because their multi-million dollar employer denied them a pay rise and job security. The bosses responded by stooping to impressive new lows.

After calling firefighters to extinguish a (perfectly well-contained, supervised) drum-fire, Pampas management also tried to turn local residents against the strikers. Locals told striking workers that Goodman Fielder management had been doorknocking the local area, handing out \$100 Coles Myer gift vouchers and encouraging them to make reports to the police. The strike was overwhelmingly made up of migrant workers who have been holding a completely peaceful and legal protest outside the factory, a place where many have worked 30+ years.

Most of the locals were 100% in support of the strike and handed over their gift vouchers, refusing what they classified as "bribes" and stating they had no issues with noise from the strike.

Meanwhile, over 2000 people signed a Megaphone petition calling on Pampas to respect their workers.

Together the workers have won fulltime permanent jobs for eleven casuals and three workers will be directly employed by the company rather than agency. Future agency casuals will be converted to direct employment after 6 months and directly employed casual workers will be converted to permanent after 12 months.

They also won union rights at Pampas so that all new starters can speak to their union and know their rights, an improved wage offer of 4.5% each year for two years plus back pay and a \$500 sign on bonus.

For support using Megaphone campaigns in your workplace, contact megaphone@vthc.org.au





Digital crowdfunding for locked out workers

Workers at Knauf, a global plaster manufacturer in Port Melbourne, were locked out of their workplace after voting down an agreement that would lower job security and allow Knauf to casualise the workforce.

Knauf sought to reduce job security by expanding the use of casual and labour-hire contracts. They proposed workers cop a real wage cut.

In an attempt to bully workers into accepting the deal, Knauf locked them out.

The shutdown came at a time when there was a shortage of plasterboard in Australia and Knauf would rather run down the industry than give the workers a fair deal.

The workers' union, CFMEU, enlisted the support of the Megaphone team to crowd-fund support for the workers during this lockout.

Workers in union - targeted using data collected in hundreds of previous industrial disputes -

collectively raised \$45,847 to support the locked out workers.

After 40 days on the grass, the workers at the Knauf site in Port Melbourne won their dispute and returned to work in November.

The workers now have a fair deal and a safer workplace because they stood up to the bosses at Knauf. This also means that workers at other Knauf sites in Australia will have more leverage to negotiate better pay and conditions. This is a huge win for workers.

The Knauf dispute is a reminder of the power of workers joining together in union. Solidarity makes a difference.

VTHC supports union fundraising efforts through our Megaphone database. For assistance setting up a crowd-funding page for your union, contact megaphone@vthc.org.au



A worker who suffered serious shoulder injury on a construction site in 2018 has resolved his workers' compensation claim for more than \$825,000.

The 38-year-old labourer was ordered by his employer to move structural steel beams that were several metres long and weighed up to 75 kilograms from a truck to a trolley, then on to a building site when he tore the muscles in his dominant right shoulder.

Despite multiple surgeries, the worker has lost all use of his shoulder and arm and continues to experience ongoing chronic pain. He is expected to require physiotherapy and pain management and medication for the rest of his life.

Slater and Gordon Senior Associate, Barakat Rezaie, issued proceedings

With Slater&Gordon, Labourer wins financial relief for shoulder injury



on the worker's behalf in the Victorian County Court for pain and suffering damages and loss of past and future earnings. It alleged the negligence of his employer and the head contractor had caused the injury.

During last minute mediation on the day his trial was expected to begin, both defendants made a joint offer of \$825,000. They also agreed to let him keep the WorkCover benefits he had previously received since the date of injury, which amounted to about \$250,000.

The offer was accepted and the worker was grateful to finally be able to move on with his life.

888

GET PAID
WHILE
YOU GET
BETTER

CASUAL OR CONTRACT
WORKER? YOU COULD
RECEIVE UP TO 5 DAYS
SICK & CARER'S PAY.

KEEP COVID OUT OF THE WORKPLACE.
STAY HOME IF YOU'RE SICK.

SCAN FOR
MORE INFO:

Sick pay

guarantee reaches
55,000 registrations

Since the launch of the Victorian Government's "sick pay guarantee" in March 2022, more than 55,000 workers have signed up to the program.

The scheme provides 38 hours sick and carers pay each year - funded by the Government at the national minimum wage - to casual and contract workers in retail, hospitality, aged care, disability, supermarket supply chains, laundry, cleaning, security and food trades.

A year on from the launch of the guarantee, the Government estimates that around a third of all eligible workers have registered for the scheme, with over 20% of registrations coming from regional workers.

It's a good start, but there's more to be done. Expanding the eligibility of the program to other heavily casualised industries would support the health of thousands more workers.



WE NEED A DIGITAL RIGHTS BILL

All Victorians should have privacy at work, and the right to disconnect from work at home.

Increased use of digital surveillance and algorithms in the workplace such as social media monitoring, movement tracking and keystroke monitoring lead to physical and mental health risks, discrimination and a loss of privacy for Victorian workers.

Victoria needs a Privacy in Working Life Act that stands alone from the Surveillance Devices Act, which limits optical, audio and tracking and data surveillance.

The proposed Privacy in Working Life Act would also limit the use of personal health information and would establish rules for the use of algorithms in the workplace.

To supplement stronger protections from digital workplace surveillance, the Victorian Government should also ensure that workers have a right to disconnect outside work hours, limiting communication from employers to emergency and critical situations.

Everyone should be able to arrange their working week in a way that meets their needs, such as arranging with their employer to work a four-day week.

CAN WE WIN A 4 DAY WORKING WEEK?

The Covid-19 pandemic forced a lot of workers and employers to reconsider the concept of “working hours” in radical new ways. In 2022 as some workers returned to their workplaces, many of us asked ourselves whether the old ways of working were really fit for purpose.

A reimagined working week could be achieved in a number of different ways. Workers should be empowered to arrange with their employer to perform their work in a way that meets their needs. Examples could include: a shorter working day such as a six-hour day; shorter working week such as a four-day work week; or working the hours of a five-day week in four longer days.

Reimagining the working week would provide additional flexibility for families allowing workers the capacity to pick up kids from school and childcare or assist with community sport while retaining full time employment.

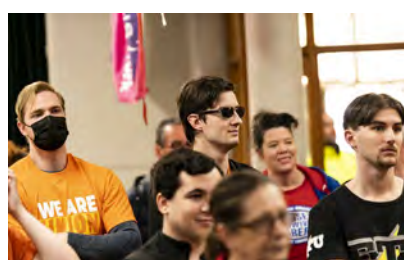
In particular, a four-day work week becoming normalised would help shift cultural attitudes and economic trends that punish women for bearing children or fulfilling caring responsibilities.

A shorter work week ultimately assists in improving work-life balance, leaving more time for rest, social activity and leisure, which are crucial to a person’s overall wellbeing and productivity. This is important as reports of burnout around the world have risen following years

of pandemic-related stress and deteriorated mental health. To ensure that workers in Victoria are each supported to bring to work their best strengths, and provide the skills that our economy needs, the Victorian Government needs to find new ways to ensure workers and their skills do not exit the workforce unnecessarily, through stress, burnout or exhaustion.

The “Digital Rights Bill” and “A reimagined working week” formed part of “The Victorian Plan” unions put to the State Government prior to the State Election. Union advocacy on these and other issues continues.







Putting the Liberals Last: Flexing union muscle in electoral politics

Scott Morrison was a truly terrible Prime Minister. Unionists in Victoria knew we had to get rid of him.

Activists targeted 3 seats in Victoria: Dunkley, Corangamite and Chisholm. The average swing against the Liberals was 4.3% nationally and 5.7% in Vic. Across our 3 seats there was an average swing against the Liberals of 8.6%

In our 3 seats there was also a primary vote swing towards Labor of 3.6% (in the rest of Victoria there





was a 3.9% primary swing away from Labor). Add in a 3.5% primary increase to the Greens and that's a 7.1% first preference swing towards progressives in these seats (compared to 2.5% in Vic and 0.9% nationally).

Our incredible union volunteers made a difference in these seats. Hundreds of worker activists gave up mornings and weekends persuading their communities not only to put the Liberals last, but to believe in something better.

Of course we weren't the only campaigners active in these seats - heaps of grassroots community campaigns mobilised for progressive change. Our combined work has achieved the change in Government we so desperately needed.

For thousands of us, this election was personal. The Liberals' utter disdain for working people cost



lives and caused devastation during covid, fires and floods.

Various community campaigns including ours worked hard to make sure Morrison's mistakes were remembered. We made sure "not my job" and "I don't hold a hose" stuck to him. We had to make it personal to counteract Morrison's penchant for the staged photo-op and love of quick-fix announcements that never resulted in policy.

So for us, "not my job" summed up everything from Morrison's failure to fix aged care, to his in-



action on wage stagnation. The idea of Morrison disappearing to Hawaii in times of strife resonated with workers in a raft of industries with different grievances.

There were a lot of incredible community campaigns around the country, and we were proud to play a role alongside them. The climate movement, women's marches, refugee advocates and others - solidarity forever!

Together we defeated a truly terrible Government and together we will hold the new Labor Government to account.



With the Federal Liberals on the dust heap of history, union volunteers turned immediately to the Victorian state election. In contrast to the overtly negative pitch at the Federal level, volunteers mobilised support around workplace issues to keep a divisive and dangerous Victorian Liberal party from seizing power.

Volunteers collected petition signatures on issues like sick pay for casual workers and reform of the apprenticeship system, in an effort to pressure

politicians to keep workplace justice squarely in focus during the state election.

It's a strategy that puts workers on the offence - campaigning for improvements to working conditions and social justice, not just resisting cuts. These conversations were the culmination of years of work by unionists to define what Government can do to improve the lives of working Victorians.

The result was yet another routing of the Victorian Liberals and a strong mandate for the Andrews Labor Government to deliver progressive policies that benefit all Victorians.





Union Arts & Culture

Fringe festival returns to Lygon St, new artworks take shape at the people's palace, and Green Bans are back.





Tips to reduce money worries in retirement

Current economic and investment market conditions are making times difficult for retirees and those planning to retire. Rises in living costs, medical costs and interest rates along with volatile investment markets may lead to worry about running out of money in retirement.

AustralianSuper have few helpful tips to consider:

1. Stay up to date on current economic conditions

Investment markets and economies are changing, and both move through stages that are hard to predict. Volatility is normal when it comes to investing and historically investment markets have increased in value long-term¹.

2. Review your investment options

If you're worrying about fluctuations in your super it may be worth reviewing your investment options to ensure you have the right investments for your circumstances and comfort level.

AustralianSuper offers members a range of retirement investment options with different objectives and risk levels to suit circumstances and risk preferences.

3. Downsizing your home may help boost your super

If you haven't quite paid off the mortgage, downsizing to a smaller home may help you to pay off debt. And if you've paid off the mortgage, downsizing could leave you with extra money to support you in retirement.

You may be eligible to put some of that money into super as part of the government Downsizer Contribution

initiative. Eligible Australians are able to make a one-off contribution to super of up to \$300,000 from the proceeds of downsizing their home.

For full eligibility criteria please see the ATO website.

4. Seek out the Age Pension option

It's important to remember that the Age Pension can be an option — giving a safety net if retirement savings reduce or run out. The Age Pension helps to provide a basic standard of living for eligible Australians who are unable to fund their retirement.

5. Strengthen your financial literacy with seminars or webinars

AustralianSuper runs seminars and webinars throughout the year to help members understand their super options, investment strategies and the state of investment markets, and our economy.

See the list of options available to you.

6. Seek expert advice

If money worries continue to keep you up at night, **speak to a financial adviser.**

AustralianSuper can provide access to a team to assist in working through financial needs for each stage of your retirement².

Find an adviser: australiansuper.com/tools-and-advice/your-advice-options



1. Investment returns aren't guaranteed. Past performance isn't a reliable indicator of future returns. 2. Personal financial product advice is provided under the Australian Financial Services Licence held by a third party and not by AustralianSuper Pty Ltd. Fees may apply. This information may be general financial advice which doesn't take into account your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. Before making a decision about AustralianSuper, you should think about your financial requirements and refer to the relevant Product Disclosure Statement available at australiansuper.com/pds or by calling 1300 300 273. A Target Market Determination (TMD) is a document that outlines the target market a product has been designed for. Find the TMDs at australiansuper.com/tmd. Sponsored by AustralianSuper Pty Ltd, ABN 94 006 457 987, AFSL 233788, Trustee of AustralianSuper ABN 65 714 394 898.



Paddy's Gallery

Paddy Garrity was a merchant seaman, member of the Painters and Dockers and Seamen's Unions and Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, and lifelong advocate for working peoples' access to and participation in the arts.

From 1996, Paddy operated a bar in the "Old Ballroom" known simply as "Paddy's Bar" and dedicated himself to transforming disused spaces in Trades Hall into arts and performance spaces. Engaging with the Melbourne Comedy Festival, Fringe Festival, and the Songlines Indigenous music festival, Paddy re-created Trades Hall as a centre for arts, culture and activism.

Garrity died in the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic after the virus entered his aged care facility in 2020. In celebration of his life, family and friends gathered to open "Paddy's Gallery" outside the Solidarity Hall mezzanine in April 2022.

Zelda

Zelda left school at 14 and became a lifelong activist when she witnessed the inequalities that women faced at work.

When the case for equal pay was taken to court and failed, Zelda chained herself to the doors of the Commonwealth Building to protest the decision.

Ten days after the police cut her off, Zelda was joined by Alva Geikie and Thelma Solomon as they chained themselves to the doors of the Arbitration Court.

Zelda, Alva and Thelma went on to found the Women's Action Committee and the Women's Liberation Centre and they led activists in campaigning across Melbourne for equal pay and women's rights.

Zelda's determination and fighting spirit amplified the voices for the fight for equal pay and women's rights.

"Today it was me, tomorrow there will be two of us, the next day there will be three. It will go on and on and there won't be any stopping it".

Pay Equality is still not a reality - and union women continue to campaign to fix that. Not coincidentally, our culture also fails to recognise women's work, activism, and political engagement equally with men's. Today, across Victoria, fewer than 3% of public monuments depict real women.

That's why, in collaboration with A Monument of One's Own and with the support of the Victorian Government through the Victorian Women's Public Art program, we're building a statue of Zelda D'Aprano outside Trades Hall to celebrate her work.

To make it happen, we need donations big and small. You can help make herstory by contributing at weareunion.org.au/zelda



Clay model for the bronze sculpture of Zelda, created by artist Jennifer Mann.

When workers first began organising and meeting at a timber shed on the corner of Lygon and Victoria Street in 1859, a Hotel soon sprang up across the street to quench workers' thirst after meetings. That Hotel was never going to be pulled down on our watch.

Saving th



In 1886, when women workers were organising against the notorious sweatshop clothing company Beath, Schiess and Co, not everyone could fit inside the Trades Hall so they instead met across the road in the pub. One hundred years later, the Victorian nurses would meet at The John Curtin during their famous strike of 1986.

It's where Frank Hardy and George Seelaf came up with the idea of underground printing of the classic novel *Power Without Glory*. In the 1980s, Alf Bamblett from the band Stray Blacks established a regular fortnightly event at the hotel to spotlight Aboriginal bands - at a time when racist hostility in the pub scene was commonplace.

In the 1960s, when most pubs relegated women to a "ladies lounge", Zelda D'Aprano argued toe-to-toe with fellow unionists in the John Curtin, and soon inspired the other women workers of Trades Hall to smash the taboo of appearing at the pub unaccompanied by a man.

It was where Norm Gallagher celebrated, where Industrial Relations journos broke stories, and where Bob Hawke's wake was held.

C





In April, when the pub was sold to overseas developers, Building Industry Group of Unions announced a Green Ban on the site – no unionist would assist in the demolition of this cultural icon.

Musicians and artists lent their voices to the media chorus, pointing out the significance of the Curtin as a live music venue.

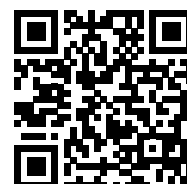
At the same time, Trades Hall partnered with the Heritage Trust in making a submission to Heritage Victoria. Heritage Victoria later recommended the protection of the John Curtin, and finally in January 2023 we learned that the owners had agreed to an impressive 10-year lease for Rusty and the Curtin crew.

Said Trades Hall Secretary Luke Hilakari: "I think the generations of people beforehand that have appreciated the John Curtin would be very pleased to see that this generation of activists have stood up for an important historical union venue," he says.

"It should send a message to every Victorian that if you've got a place that's special, that you think should be protected, and if you're willing to stand up for yourselves and with others, then you can get that job done," Hilakari says.

SHOP





weareunion.org.au/SHOP

For a number of years Victorian Unions have been pushing for greater planning and public investment in the energy transition in Victoria.

Unions were the only voice publicly advocating for the re-creation of the State Electricity Commission prior to the Andrews Government's commitment in the lead-up to the state election. This policy proposal was very well received across the state, and played a major role in the government's victory.

We are pleased to see that, in the wake of the election, the government has moved quickly to get the SEC into place. Its initial focus will be on the construction of 5GW of publicly-owned renewable energy, and the creation of thousands of apprenticeships in the sector.

UNITED FOR JUST TR



Climate Conference delegates,
Solidarity Hall

But while having targets for renewable energy generation is important; implementing them is the crucial part. Star of the South - a union-backed offshore wind development project off the coast of Gippsland - has been given Major Project status, important to ensure that its generation capacity is built in time for the closure of Yallourn power station.

In another sign of the changing policy landscape since the expulsion of the LNP Morrison Government, Gladstone Regional Council has launched its 10-year economic transition roadmap to support and guide the region to becoming a renewable energy superpower.

The roadmap will see this community in prime position to respond to once-in-a-generation changes in the energy sector.





ETU activists celebrate election night at Trades Hall

RANSITIONS

THE AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNION INSTITUTE CLIMATE CHANGE FOR UNIONISTS TRAINING COURSE WILL RUN AGAIN IN 2023 - TRAINING DATES CAN BE FOUND AT WEAREUNION.ORG.AU.

Talking racial justice and making sense

The success of the labour movement depends on the unity of the working class. But capital and conservative forces are successfully dividing workers along ethnic, religious and racial lines – distracting workers from achieving our objectives by stoking fear and hatred.

In our workplaces, employers exploit structural racism to pay migrant or offshore workers less than they would pay a local worker – creating a false sense of scarcity or “downwards pressure on wages” and further entrenching migrant worker disadvantage.

At the same time, right wing political forces capitalise on local workers’ discontent by scapegoating ethnic and religious minorities. The effect is to divide working class political power.

Unions are organising migrant communities, but our language may unintentionally reinforce negative framing that suggests the migrant workers themselves are part of the problem: “support Aussie jobs”; “exploited foreign workers”; “import overseas workers”.

Unions are rebuilding a shared narrative of working-class solidarity – one that is more compelling than the fear-based and divisive narrative being pushed by right wing forces and capital.

In the United States, research by Anat Shenker-Orsorio has demonstrated that progressive social movements can increase their appeal by directly evoking unity across racial difference. For example, appeals to “put the interests of working people first, whether white, Black, or brown” outperform appeals to “put the interests of working people first”.

Acknowledging the potential for cultural difference between audiences in the United States and Australia, Victorian Trades Hall Council – with



Union delegates discuss racial justice at the Women's Rights at Work Conference





the assistance of the ACTU behavioural insights unit - set out to test a new message framework we called "Every Worker in Australia" against typical "migrant-blaming" language to identify the most persuasive and accurate language to communicate union messages.

The research showed that by communicating cross-racial working class solidarity against a clearly identified common foe (be it conservative politicians or greedy employers), union messages became 10% more persuasive across almost all demographic segments.

Unions and labour councils are now hosting training sessions for organisers and delegates in using "Every worker in Australia" language, and applying best practice in discussing issues of race in union communications.

The training is timely, with many unions gearing up to campaign on the "Yes" campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in 2023, and business interests continuing to punish the working class for the corporate-greed-price-spiral currently causing inflation.

Now more than ever, working people across Australia will need to stand together to demand higher wages, better employment conditions, and fair treatment at work - no matter what language we speak or where we were born.

Download the *Every Worker in Australia* report at weareunion.org.au/publications

To arrange training for your union meeting, contact Edwina Byrne, VTHC Communications Lead. ebyrne@vthc.org.au | 9659 3511

Racial Justice is inextricably linked to economic justice. As long as we let employers divide us by race, ethnicity, language and visa status, we'll be fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

HSR INITIAL OHS TRAINING COURSE

Section 67 of the OH&S Act 2004 entitles all elected Health & Safety Reps and Deputy Health & Safety Reps to undertake a WorkSafe Victoria-approved 5 Day HSR Initial OHS Training Course and choose their course in consultation with their employer. VTHC is approved by WorkSafe to deliver this important training, either in one full block of 5 days or splitting the 5 days into two multi-day sessions, if preferred.

This WorkSafe-approved training course will help HSRs and DHSRs understand and exercise their powers effectively. This training equips HSRs and DHSRs with the confidence, skills and knowledge to represent their designated work group and to help make their workplace safer.

Further information

HSRs and DHSRs will leave the training course with an understanding of the objectives of the OHS Act 2004 and their role under the Act, including:

- Interpreting the OHS legislation framework and its relationship to the HSR
- Identifying key parties and their legislative obligations and duties
- Establishing representation in the workplace
- Participating in consultation and issue resolution
- Representing DWG members in any OHS risk management process undertaken by the appropriate duty holder/s
- Issuing a PIN and directing the cessation of work.

Course hours: 9am - 5pm

Course length: 5 days

Course fee: \$950 inc. GST (Metro & Regional)

PLEASE NOTE: Commencing 1 July 2022, courses will require a minimum of 12 participants to proceed. Course participants enrolled in courses will be notified of cancellation if necessary and will be contacted to re-schedule.



**For upcoming dates
or to book a course,
scan the QR code**

Victorian Trades Hall Council OHS Training Unit

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weareunion.org.au/ohs_training_unit