“HMM... I CAN BRING BACK WORKCHOICES AND JUST CALL IT SOMETHING ELSE!”

WHY WE MUST VOTE LABOR

INSIDE EXECUTIVE SALARIES / ALL THE LATEST NEWS / COWBOY’S HOUSE OF STOUSH!

HELPING THE HELPLESS
The AWU’s commitment to ending suffering

LOCAL HERO
Meet Ronni Kahn & OzHarvest
At ISPT we manage and develop a portfolio of quality office, retail and industrial properties exclusively for our investors, members of Australian industry super funds.

We believe our investors’ money should work as hard as they do. We focus on delivering a balance of competitive short term returns as well as the highest long term returns without exposing our investors’ funds to undue risk.

ISPT Pty Ltd
Level 13, 114 William Street
Melbourne 3000

Tel: (03) 8601 6666
Fax: (03) 8601 6667
Website: www.ispt.net.au

Melbourne’s GPO is proudly owned by ISPT’s Core Fund.
FEATURES
06 BREAKING DOWN THE GENDER BARRIER
Women are now taking up jobs in some of the most blokey of occupations. But is it as hard for women to break through as some might think?

12 COVER STORY: WHY I'M VOTING LABOR
All indicators point to an early Federal election. Here, AWU members tell us why they’re voting Labor and why we must keep the Liberals out.

14 HELPING THE HELPLESS
In Australia we are lucky to live in peace and have fresh water and food available. Now the AWU is committed to assist those in urgent need of help.

20 FIGHTING FIT AND FEELING FINE
Men have not always enjoyed the best reputation when it comes to looking after their health. And the stats show that men’s health is a pressing issue.

40 COWBOY’S HOUSE OF STOUSH
He’s no stranger when it comes to fighting for workers’ rights, but Rod “Cowboy” Stockham is a knockout in other quarters too!

42 MONEY FOR NOTHING
Executive lurks, perks and packages have been hot news lately. But while the rest of us battle through the GFC, those at the “big end of town” are still living the dream!

46 RONNI’S VISION
When Ronni Kahn saw our society’s shameful food waste and, at the same time, the growing number of people going hungry, she knew something had to be done. So she did it. Meet our Local Hero.

REGULARS
04 National Opinion
25 Frontline News
38 Meet the Delegates/Officials
50 Bindi & Ringer

Privacy Notice
This issue of The Australian Worker may contain offers, competitions, or surveys which require you to provide information about yourself if you choose to enter or take part in them (Reader Offer). If you provide information about yourself to ACP Magazines Ltd (ACP), ACP will use this information to provide you with the products or services you have requested, and may supply your information to contractors that help ACP to do this. ACP will also use your information to inform you of other ACP publications, products, services and events. ACP may also give your information to organisations that are providing special prizes or offers and that are clearly associated with the Reader Offer. Unless you tell us not to, we may give your information to other organisations that may use it to inform you about other products, services or events or to give to other organisations that may use it for this purpose. If you would like to gain access to the information ACP holds about you, please contact ACP’s Privacy Officer at ACP Magazines Ltd, 54-58 Park Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000. Cover photo: Newspix
S

ome time in 2010, AWU Members, along with all other Australians of voting age, will cast a vote in the Federal election. It may not be until later in the year, but all of us will have to make a decision on who is best to lead Australia into the future. The choice is stark, between the Australian Labor Party, and the conservative Liberal/National coalition.

The AWU and its members have a long history with the ALP. It was AWU Members under the “Tree of Knowledge” in Barcaldine who created the ALP more than 100 years ago.

Back then, the value of the labor movement having a political arm was obvious. The shearsers’ strikes having been crushed by the military, those brave AWU Members could see that industrial strength was not enough. For working families to get a fair go, they needed a political party that represented their interests. From that, the ALP was formed.

While AWU Members might not always agree with everything the ALP does, we always remember that, for workers, the worst Labor government is incomparably better than the best Liberal/National government.

It may seem like a long time ago, but the struggles that AWU Members in shearing went through fighting the squatters and their idea of “freedom” of contract is very similar to the fight that AWU Members fought three years ago against AWA individual contracts.

AWU Members, and other unionists, won the fight against WorkChoices in 2007, and now the Liberals have elected a leader who has stated his aim to bring it back, called something different. Same old snake, brand new skin.

He has stated that if elected, his government will bring back individual contracts, and remove protection from unfair dismissal for millions of working Australians.

Individual contracts undermine the ability of workers to collectively bargain. Only by sticking together and bargaining together as union members do workers have a chance to match the power of their employer.

In 2010, AWU Members will remember WorkChoices, and recognise it by any name, and vote accordingly.
Who would have thought that in 2010 we would be revisiting the themes of the last Federal election? I was convinced that never, ever again would WorkChoices get a re-run...

WorkChoices was so unpopular among Australian voters I thought that the Liberals were smart enough to never, ever again revisit those laws. I was convinced they wouldn't even try to rebrand that policy to win an election.

I thought they knew – as well as I did – that WorkChoices so obviously attacked working families, so obviously undermined Australian “fair go” values, that no voter would think of ticking the box next to the Liberal candidate’s name if they revisited that policy.

I was wrong. I gotta admit it. But then I never, ever thought that Tony Abbott would be allowed to captain the Liberal team.

I was wrong with that also. I gotta admit it.

Now Tony Abbott – who was once in charge of the WorkChoices laws – has asked his best mate, Eric Abetz, from Tasmania, to run up the flag for a new version of those old laws.

And he has told the Opposition team that this will be a key part of his campaign at the 2010 Federal election.

So whenever the election is called union members will need to go out once more and vote against WorkChoices.

Our union will join with other unions to make sure our families, and our neighbours, know that the horror of WorkChoices will return if Tony Abbott becomes Prime Minister.

The one good thing about having a re-run of the WorkChoices campaign is that if they get it defeated at two elections in a row you would think that the Liberals would learn a lesson – and never, ever again raise the issue as a campaign theme in future elections.

Having to put more effort and energy into defeating WorkChoices – which I thought we did in 2007 – is a pain in the neck. I accept that.

But I am asking for your help in this coming Federal election.

Let’s finally get our workplace laws off the political agenda. Let’s get all political parties to realize Australians demand decent, fair and balanced work laws which give them a voice on the job.

If we do that in 2010 we can, finally, turn our energies to solidifying our voices in the workplace.

We can move on to building new security for working families who have only one ask from their employers – a bit of decency, a bit of respect.
BREAKING DOWN THE GENDER BARRIER

Donna Reeves and Laura Macfarlane discover that women are now taking up jobs in some of the most blokey of occupations. And it’s not as hard for women to break through as some might think. Photos: Getty Images

Construction workers

Annie Betts was sitting in a north Queensland pub when a bloke from the John Holland Group came in and asked the barmaid who the best cleaner in the area was. The barmaid pointed straight to Annie, and the building site administrator offered her a job on the spot. Fifteen years later, Annie still works on construction sites. Not bad for someone who’s 64.

Annie says she’s has done everything from driving senior management to appointments and the airport and back to cleaning building sites. Sometimes, when it’s quiet, she gets to work as a tradies’ assistant, and her work has taken her to many parts of Queensland and even into New South Wales.

The site Annie currently works on is a bauxite processing plant in Gladstone. It has about 850 workers, which is pretty small, Annie says. Despite her age and gender, she says working in a traditionally male environment has never caused any problems.

“The blokes are cool,” she says. “You become really good mates. You might work with them on one job and then not see them again for five years, but then you find yourself working with them again. It’s really good.”

Annie says she could never go back to anything else. She loves the work and the money’s great. “Besides,” she says, “the bosses have told me I can’t retire.”

Getting a job in construction wasn’t as easy for Charlotte Busby. After getting her rigging and dogging ticket in 2005, it took her three years to convince a company to take her on.

A rigger’s major role is to assemble, install and position the machinery and equipment used to lift and shift the materials used in the construction of bridges and buildings, and they work with cranes, cables, pulleys, winches and ropes. They also work closely with crane drivers.

“I’d go out to construction sites and ask them for jobs and they’d laugh at me and wouldn’t give me a go,” Charlotte, 45, says.

Keen to leave factory work behind her, Charlotte completed a six-week Women in Civil Construction course. As part of it she visited the Redcliffe site in Brisbane where the Houghton Highway Bridge was being constructed. She confidently asked the building crew lots of questions about its construction and as a result was offered a two-week work placement. She obviously impressed the bosses because she was offered a job with the Albem engineering company. That was 18 months ago.

Charlotte’s job is not for the faint-hearted. She works with materials
Many women who have entered “non-traditional” industries are pleased to have done so.

A large part of her job involves swinging a seven-pound sledge hammer.

weighing more than a tonne, and has to ensure everything is easily balanced when it gets hooked up to the crane. It’s not unusual for her to spend her day in a small cage, 40 metres above the ground, working on the bridge’s construction.

“I like being outside, and I like the physical work,” Charlotte says.

“I’ve done factory work all my life and I wanted to do something different, and this is great. I love it.”

Despite having a tough time breaking into rigging, Charlotte says the blokes treat her well. Apart from those working in the office, she’s the only female on the site, but she reckons if other women are interested they should give it a go.

“It’s good stuff,” she says. But obviously you can’t be scared of heights, or hard work.

Refinery operator
Michelle Hapuku is one tough woman. Just two days after surgery and still in hospital, she happily takes my call and is prepared to be interviewed.

It’s no real surprise she’s tough, to be honest. A large part of her job at one of Alcoa’s aluminium refineries in Western Australia involves swinging a seven-pound sledge hammer. She’s been doing it for 14 years, since she was 24, and doesn’t think she’ll be quitting anytime soon. For one, working as a refinery operator pays good money, and the job offers a lot of variety, so she doesn’t get bored.

“You can start off with three priorities at the beginning of a shift and it’s not unusual not to end up doing even one of them because the plant changes all the time,” she says.

Michelle uses the sledgehammer to open and close all of the valves at the refinery when taking samples and changing pumps or tanks.

“I’ve been here for 14 years and I’m still learning,” she says. “There’s always new processes to learn, new technology. It can be very challenging. You can go to a job and something’s not working out the way it’s supposed to so you have to find a solution. There’s always more than one way to do the job.”

Michelle’s uncle prompted her to get into refinery work, saying it was a good career. There weren’t that many women on the job back then, and some of those who did get employment couldn’t handle the hard, physical work. Their poor performance sometimes made it hard for Michelle to be accepted fully, but now she says that is all in the past. Despite being the only female in her nine-strong crew, the blokes she works with are fully supportive. “They spoil me rotten,” she laughs.

Michelle works shifts and says the hardest part of her job is working nights between 3am and 5am. There are also times she can’t do things that the men can. “But that’s because I’m only five feet tall, not because I’m a girl,” she says, laughing.

Mine workers
Kyra Bonney drives trucks, very big trucks, those yellow trucks with huge wheels they use in mining which dwarf a person standing next to them.

“In 1996 when Kyra was 19 she moved back to Kalgoorlie, where she’s from, and saw an advertisement to do the Aboriginal Mining Training Course, which, if you complete it successfully, guarantees you a job in mining.

This, by anyone’s standards, is not usually a job that women do.

In 1996 when Kyra was 19 she moved back to Kalgoorlie, where she’s from, and saw an advertisement to do the Aboriginal Mining Training Course, which, if you complete it successfully, guarantees you a job in mining.

The course was sponsored by five major mining companies in and around the Goldfields and I got through it and was lucky enough to get my first preference which was to work at Paddington Gold Mine as a dump truck driver.

“I worked for Leighton’s contractors but before they allowed me on the trucks, which were Komatsu 777, I had to do two weeks on the blast crew... it was here that I first was trained on driving dump trucks,” says Kyra.

Kyra, who has had a number of stints over the last 14 years driving big trucks for the mining industry, is also a single mother of a teenage daughter.

“At Argyle diamond mine I drove
Caterpillar 785 and 789 trucks along with the electrical trucks Terex uni rig 4400. I then did a two week stint at Pannawonica flying in and out of Perth driving trucks. And my next job was working at Sunrise Dam, which is near Laverton, in the Goldfields working for Downer EDI mining driving Caterpillar 793 trucks.

While working at Hope Downs in the Pilbara for Rio Tinto in 2008, Kyra drove Komatsu 830 electric trucks and also started a course at Curtin University studying for a degree in Indigenous Community Management and Development.

“I get a lot of enjoyment being a mentor and role model for Aboriginal people, especially women being in mining,” she says.

Kyra says there have been a couple of incidents with men not dealing well with a woman having the job as a truck driver in mining but on the whole she has been fortunate to have met a lot of great guys, both young and old, and from different cultural backgrounds.

“I guess it’s mostly to do with my personality, but I’m still mates with them up to this day.

“I have been offered to be trained up on diggers, dozers, graders and loaders by all the companies I have worked for, but I knocked them back. I prefer to just drive trucks.”

Ethel Proud used to be a tourist officer on the Spirit Of Tasmania ferry, spending her days on the open seas with hundreds of people around her. Now, her life couldn’t be more different. As a truck driver with mining company MMG in Rosebery, Tasmania, Ethel spends much of her 12-hour workdays underground, with only her mine radio for company.

The truck Ethel drives isn’t a small
Learning new skills in higher paying jobs is attracting women into broader industries.

one, either, weighing 55-tonnes and capable of hauling huge loads of waste through the maze of roads that exists beneath the surface.

Before starting work for MMG around two-and-a-half years ago, Ethel, 37, had no trucking experience at all. Thanks to a few months of on-the-job training, she is now one of the two qualified female drivers at the mine.

A normal 12-hour shift sees her drive several kilometres underground, pick a load and then return to the surface. On average, she might make the trip only five times a shift; it’s a slow process, with travelling speeds sometimes as low as five kilometres an hour, and generally not much faster.

Despite the pace, Ethel says the job is good fun, although admits just occasionally it can get a little monotonous. The self-confessed tomboy was thinking of moving from her home state of Tasmania to Western Australia to pursue a career in the mines, but was lucky enough to score a job locally.

A normal 12-hour shift sees her drive several kilometres underground, pick a load and then return to the surface. On average, she might make the trip only five times a shift; it’s a slow process, with travelling speeds sometimes as low as five kilometres an hour, and generally not much faster.

Despite the pace, Ethel says the job is good fun, although admits just occasionally it can get a little monotonous. The self-confessed tomboy was thinking of moving from her home state of Tasmania to Western Australia to pursue a career in the mines, but was lucky enough to score a job locally. She was attracted to the mining industry by the money that can be made. Coming from low-paid casual work in the travel sector, the chance to earn a decent living and support herself proved very attractive.

Although it’s a male-dominated industry, Ethel is happy with the mutual respect she and her male colleagues have for each other. She says their sense of humour lightens a long working day and that it’s great to be able to have a laugh at work.

While a lot of people may baulk at being several kilometres deep underground, Ethel says she’s not scared at all. The mine has strict safety procedures and each shift is carefully planned out. She’s also in constant contact with other workers via her mine radio, so spending all that time on her own in the truck doesn’t make her lonely.

She has outlasted the two years she initially thought she would work at the mine.

“The guys that I work with have been here for twenty or thirty years, and they said to me that I’ll be here for ever. I really don’t know how long I’ll stay – probably as long as they’ll have me. I work with a really good crew; they’re excellent!”

Steel industry worker

Being the only woman Delegate for the AWU at BlueScope Steel near Wollongong does not daunt Kerry Stone.

“At meetings, the blokes can get a tad ‘feisty’ at times,” Kerry laughs. “But they have no problem with me being the only woman in the mix.”

Kerry acquired the Delegate’s role from another woman who shared the position about nine years ago, and is the only woman to have held it alone.

“No one else wanted the job so I put my hand up. I’d had no experience with working with the Union on that level but I was interested.

“And there haven’t been any really pressing issues to deal with since the WorkChoices legislation was replaced,” she adds.

Kerry, who works in the canteen at the steelworks, has kids and grandkids, and no plans on giving up work or her Delegate role just yet.

“I love it. I have learnt so much about our rights doing this job [as Delegate], that I had no idea about before.”

Manufacturing worker

Ida Palermo works at Lockwood lock makers in Melbourne, where she’s an AWU Delegate. “I’ve been here a while – 16 years, in fact,” she says with a chuckle.

Ida works on an assembly line and it’s skilled, fast-paced work. “Depending on the type of lock, I work on 100 to maybe 250 locks a day,” she says.

Ida says that there’s pretty much a balanced ratio between male and female employees at the workplace and that everyone mixes well.

Ida is passionate about her role as AWU Delegate and says that it’s easy to see the difference between unionised and non-unionised workplaces.

“It’s always rewarding when a fellow worker asks about the Union, what it does and how it works,” she says. “I have the opportunity to explain the benefits of joining and getting the message across.

“When a worker joins up, it makes us stronger and more able to protect our working entitlements.” w
Injured?

For expert legal advice call 1800 810 812

- WorkCover
- Road Accident Injuries / TAC
- Medical Negligence
- Asbestos Diseases
- Superannuation & Insurance Claims
- Public Liability
- Faulty Products
- Comcare
- Will Disputes

Free legal advice for AWU members & their families
Free Will for AWU members & their spouse

No win – No charge*
Free first consultation*
*conditions apply

Maurice Blackburn
Lawyers
Since 1919

www.mauriceblackburn.com.au
If you’re concerned about the Federal election, so are some other AWU members.

The previous Liberal government, under John Howard, was responsible for the introduction of WorkChoices and some of the most draconian industrial relations laws in the western world. And Liberal leader Tony Abbott was an obsessive supporter of WorkChoices. If the Liberals win the next election, you can be sure that something very, very similar to WorkChoices will impact on your working life. Are you prepared to risk that happening?

Here, some of your fellow AWU members talk about why they will be voting Labor. W
We need to get the Rudd Government back because we know what life was like for workers under Howard. I heard that Tony Abbot has already talked about bringing back WorkChoices. As a mum with young kids, I don’t want my children being exploited when they get jobs. And as a mum, I think the money Kevin Rudd has already spent on schools and education is great.”
Joyanne Higginbottom, Queensland

I have seen lots of changes over the years – it is so important that unions are recognized as having a legitimate and important role – at least our current Government recognizes we exist.”
Robin Denne, South Australia

Keeping jobs in Australia is a major issue that many workers face today. The ALP is working to protect Australian jobs and working families by investing to create jobs and ensuring that we have a strong economy for the future.”
Peter King, Victoria

The AWU had tried to form an Enterprise Agreement during the Howard Government’s WorkChoices era, but with limited membership, the company refrained from bargaining.

The company then produced a five-year WorkChoices agreement for all employees to sign. As a result, we rang the Union and an Organiser came out to explain the many flaws in signing such an agreement. Because of this, it was voted down and we decided that once Fair Work Australia commenced, the AWU would represent us in forming a new Agreement.

Union membership has increased dramatically and we are in negotiations with a far greater say as employees under Labor’s Fair Work Australia, compared to the Liberal’s WorkChoices rules. Under Labor we have more say and better job security for the future, which is of great benefit to our families.”
Trish Stringer, South Australia

Kevin Rudd’s Labor Government has pretty much delivered on everything that it’s promised to do. He said at the last election that we were going to apologise to Indigenous Australians, and he did. He said he was going to sign the Kyoto Protocol, and he did. And now he’s unrolled great education and building stimulus packages. For a Government to promise something is one thing, but to deliver it and keep its promises is another. Top Job Kev!”
Chris King, Western Australia

Kevin Rudd’s team did well regarding the economic downturn – there is no doubt in my mind that they saved jobs.”
Shane Watson, South Australia

Can I just say that I am shit scared that Abbott, Hockey and the rest of their mob might get back in – look what they did to us last time.”
John Murphy, South Australia

The election of the Rudd Labor Government has ensured that everyday workers get a fair go at work. The introduction of the Fair Work Act has given workers increased job security and greater unfair dismissal protection. I’m voting Labor because, overall, workers are better off under a Labor Government.”
Robbie Rudd, Victoria
Located in Kenya, and 80 kilometres from the Somali border, Dadaab is the largest refugee camp in the world.
Here in Australia we are fortunate to live in peace, with drinkable water and food to eat. But for many people around the world, the staples of existence are rare commodities. Now the AWU is doing something to aid those in urgent need of our assistance. Cate Carrigan reports. Photos: Australia for UNHCR
Somali woman Muraya was 27 and pregnant with her first child when she fled over the border into Kenya following the bloody overthrow of the military dictator Siad Barre.

Nineteen years later and a mother of nine, she still lives in the stiflingly overcrowded Dadaab refugee camp along with 300,000 others who have fled 20 years of war in their native Somalia.

Situated just 80 kilometres from the Somali border in Kenya, Dadaab is the biggest refugee camp in the world. Built for 90,000, it is chronically underfunded, hasn't enough clean water or medical facilities, and 80 per cent of its residents are women and children who rely on humanitarian aid to survive.

While the refugees want to be resettled, there are far too few places on offer and most applications are rejected. It's unlikely Muraya and her husband will ever leave the camp, although they hold out some hope for their children.

Despite that, Muraya remains positive, using time in the camp to work for change, setting up The Women Together Project to provide literacy and numeracy skills to women. She's also helped establish sewing and tie-dye cooperatives, all with the aim of giving the women and girls life-changing skills.

It's people like Muraya that inspire Naomi Steer, the former Unions NSW Assistant Secretary and now National Director of Australia for UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency.

A long-time fighter for social justice, in the 1980s Naomi was sent by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs to the United Nations in New York to work on refugee and women’s issues and then to India where she was responsible for cultural exchanges.

But she felt the need to contribute at home, so came back to Australia to work with the union movement, initially getting a job with Actors Equity, and then the amalgamated Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) before being elected as an Assistant

Naomi Steer, a former Unions NSW Assistant Secretary, is now National Director of Australia for UNHCR.

“Unions are important to us and are good in responding to urgent requests for aid.”

NAOMI STEER
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF AUSTRALIA FOR UNHCR
Australia for UNHCR works tirelessly to promote and support health care and literacy programs in refugee camps.

**How AWU Members Can Help Solve These Problems:**

- **$12**
  - Can buy five jerry cans to enable refugees to collect clean water – UNHCR wants to dig new bores and wells – as many of the refugees receive only eight litres of water per day, less than half the recommended requirement of 20 litres.

- **$27**
  - Can give a child a desk, chair and a year’s supply of school books and stationery.

- **$45**
  - Can provide effective malaria treatment for 15 refugee children.

- **$50**
  - Can buy a shelter.

- **$100**
  - Can buy medical equipment – camp health centres on average treat 19,000 individuals each, with children particularly in danger from diseases including malaria, cholera and measles.

- **$430**
  - Can supply a water distribution point with six taps.
AWU TO THE RESCUE

Secretary with Unions NSW.

“At Unions NSW, I focused on working with the broader community towards social change and justice, working with refugee groups and getting others involved with the underprivileged.

In 2000, Naomi was appointed National Director of Australia for UNHCR which raises money for UNHCR’s projects.

“Most of our money comes from ordinary Australians. Unions are really important to us and are particularly good in responding to urgent requests for aid, for example the Asian tsunami,” Naomi says.

Naomi is enthusiastic about working with the AWU to raise money to improve the way people are living day to day by providing vital support such as a safe water supply.

“The real tragedy is that many will be born and die in the camp; there just aren’t enough resettlements to meet the demand, with most applications rejected,” Naomi says. “If we all give some small support, we can bring about big changes for the better for women like Muraya and her children who have no one else to help them.”

Naomi wants funds raised by the AWU to go to tangible improvements in the camp, things such as a safer water supply, better medical facilities and more classrooms – there are currently only three secondary schools for the entire camp and although only 48 per cent of its children are enrolled in school, classes are overcrowded with a teacher/pupil ratio of 1:103. But she says the basic conditions and lack of facilities don’t keep children away from school.

“I am amazed at how positive these children are,” she says. “They live in hovels but turn up to school and are so proud to be able to attend.”

The AWU Partnership

The plight of refugees is an issue close to the heart of AWU National Secretary Paul Howes, who sees them as “among the most vulnerable people on our planet”.

“Many Australians came here as refugees – not just as post-war immigrants but as refugees fleeing famine and poverty in countries like Ireland and England,” Paul says.

“The Union is made up of many refugees, migrants and their descendants and has a proud record of looking after the oppressed. So it is important that the Union does its bit to help these people.”

Paul says the AWU has decided to support Australia for UNHCR because United Nations workers are always the first ones called in to help in a refugee crisis, such as conflicts in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

“The main thing we are asking our members to do is to donate money to the organisation,” Paul says. “If they are able to, we’re asking members to spare a few dollars. Unions are about helping those who don’t have a voice and I can’t think of a group who are more vulnerable or without a voice more than the refugees.

Paul says the AWU, in addition to calling for donations, will ask high-profile supporters of Australia for UNHCR, including Ian Chappell and Jane Turner, to talk at the Union’s national conference next year.

TO DONATE TO UNHCR’S DADAAB APPEAL

Call 1300 361 288, or go to www.UNrefugees.org.au, or send a cheque to Australia for UNHCR, AWU Dadaab Appeal, Reply Paid 428, Queen Victoria Building NSW 1229
AWU members can help improve facilities and amenities in the over-crowded and under-resourced camp. Opposite While the Dadaab camp was built to accommodate 90,000 refugees, its population is now around 300,000.

Australia for UNHCR is committed to improving the lives of the world’s most vulnerable and the AWU has pledged to assist them.
FIGHTING FIT AND FEELING
Stats show that men have not always enjoyed the greatest reputation when it comes to looking after their health. Melissa Sweet investigates. Photos: Getty Images

Men are not only more likely to die younger than women, they are also less likely to use health services. But the times are changing, and men’s health is getting a makeover. Men’s sheds and health groups are springing up, particularly in rural and regional Australia.

Chief Executive of Mensheds Australia, Peter Sergeant, says there are now about 400 men’s sheds “in varying stages of development” around the country. By bringing men together to undertake a range of activities, they encourage them to be physically, mentally and socially active.

Men’s sheds are expected to be endorsed strongly in a forthcoming national men’s health policy. A Federal Department of Health and Ageing information paper on the policy notes

**MEN’S HEALTH BY NUMBERS**

- Australian men have the second-highest life expectancy in the world, bettered only by Japan.
- Male life expectancy declines progressively from 79 years for city dwellers, through inner and outer regional and remote areas to 72 years for those in very remote areas.
- The median age at death for men in 2005 was 76.8 years compared with 82.9 years for women.
- The health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men is worse than any other subgroup in Australia. Their life expectancy is about 17 years less than average life expectancy for all Australian men (69 years and 76 years respectively for the period 1996–2001). There is also a six-year gap in life expectancy between indigenous men and indigenous women.
- Men generally use health services less than women. In 2006–07, for example, only 29.4 per cent of men who had experienced a mental disorder in the preceding 12 months sought services, compared with 46 per cent of females.
- Services that are “men-friendly” have proved popular. Mensline, a telephone counselling service, receives 80,000 phone calls each year, mainly from men, including many from rural areas. (Contact: www.menslineaus.org.au; ph 1300 789 978).
- The main contributors to men’s illness are smoking, high blood pressure, weight and obesity, high blood cholesterol, physical inactivity, and alcohol.

**Sources:** Senate inquiry into men’s health, 2009. Department of Health and Ageing information paper for a national men’s health policy
that men’s sheds help overcome social isolation, which it says is “a risk factor for both mental and physical illness”.

The new national policy is also expected to stress the need for health services to become more men-friendly, and to suggest that it is time to stop blaming men for not seeking access to health care.

“Consideration of availability, access and suitability of services in line with men’s values and practices is likely to offer more fruitful explanations and ways to better engage men with appropriate health service use,” the paper says.

This assessment rings true for Dr Mike Beckoff, a GP from Murray Bridge in South Australia who has a special interest in men’s health, mental health and sexual health.

He says health services often do not make efforts to create environments which explicitly welcome and engage men. Instead of having only women’s magazines in the waiting room, for example, there should also be magazines, leaflets and TV programs likely to attract men.

Accommodating men’s needs also means having extended opening hours and offering some flexibility around appointments. Men are particularly unlikely to tolerate being kept waiting, he adds.

Dr Beckoff says good communication skills are also important, as men are often slow or reluctant to disclose problems, especially if they involve sensitive issues such as mental or sexual health matters.

But no matter how men-friendly health services become, he believes the answers to improving men’s health do not lie with clinical services. Instead, health programs need to be taken to where men get together.

“You have to get out to them on their turf, where they feel comfortable,” he says. “If it means getting to the pubs and clubs and those sorts of places, that’s where you may have to go.”

If you’re wondering what sort of health checks might be recommended for someone of your age, see this chart published by the Royal Australian College of GPs which can be downloaded from www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/redbook.

**TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH**

- Don’t smoke
- Drink alcohol in moderation
- Make exercise part of your daily routine
- Eat more fruit and vegetables
- Enjoy quality time with family and friends
- Develop a relationship with a GP

---

**I went 27 days without a cigarette once, and the worst thing I did was have that next one.”**

* Ned Knezevic
Sciaccas Lawyers and Consultants
Official lawyers for the AWU in Queensland.

Advising the Union and its members for over 25 years.

Visting Queensland Wide.

- Workplace Accidents and Injuries
- Workers’ Compensation Claims
- Workers’ Compensation Appeals
- Workers’ Compensation Reviews
- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Superannuation Claims
- Family Law
- Criminal Law

Call 1800 658 525 toll free

www.sciaccas.com.au

ICON Place
Level 4, 270 Adelaide Street, Brisbane
3 things you should know about Tony Abbott and Workchoices

1. Mr Abbott thinks Workchoices was good for families

“The Howard Government’s industrial legislation, it was good for wages, it was good for jobs, and it was good for workers. And let’s never forget that.”

Source: Parliament House Interview 19 March 2008

2. Mr Abbott said ending individual work contracts was a great leap backwards

End of AWA’s a ‘great leap backwards’

Source: The Australian 14 September 2009

3. If elected Mr Abbott will reintroduce individual work contracts and get rid of unfair dismissal laws for most of the workforce

Work Choices not dead yet, says Abbott

Source: Australian Financial Review 4 December 2009

Mr Abbott’s extreme beliefs would hurt families
NATIONAL NEWS
Find out what YOUR union is doing for YOU...

JOB SATISFACTION INDEX RESULTS
REVEALED AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

IN FEBRUARY, AWU National Secretary Paul Howes addressed the National Press Club on a wide range of topics including job creation, job security and the findings of the AWU’s Auspoll Job Satisfaction Index.

This important commissioned index tracks changes in attitudes to jobs and job security.

Paul said that since the doldrums of the 2008-2009 Global Financial Crisis, confidence in the economy has increased. However, this optimism has not yet translated into positive personal experiences.

“We released the first Job Satisfaction Index report this time last year,” Paul said.

“Now we have gone back to it; and it will come out henceforth at the start of every parliamentary year so we can track changes in attitudes to jobs and job security by Australia’s working people across the years.”

Paul said that as the Government’s stimulus package has impacted on Australia there has been a sharp drop in the number of workers concerned that the overall economy will continue to deteriorate.

However, the poll revealed that, at a personal level, workers continue to worry about the future of their own jobs.

“Our poll shows working people are more likely to report difficulties at work in the last six months – such as increased workload or losing their job – than they did this time last year,” Paul said.

“This data should not be a great surprise. Those who earn more are less concerned about losing their job than those who earn less.”

Much can be gleaned from a poll such as this, as the following statistics reveal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confident in finding a similar job with similar pay:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29 year olds: 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50s: 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional workers: 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan workers: 38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Many workers still believe that unions are the most likely group to act in their interests:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree that unions act in their interest: 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that employers are too concerned with profits: 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had been consulted by their employer about job security: 28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The poll shows us that the Government’s handling of the global financial crisis is seen as truly positive.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support funding for infrastructure projects: 81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy Australian made campaign: 78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politically, workers believe that Labor offers them more protection:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believe that workers need more protection: 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe the Labor Party shares this view: 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe the Liberal Party supports less security: 57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Older workers, as a rule, are actually reporting fewer difficulties in the workplace than younger workers.

While, surprisingly, regional workers showed reasonable confidence:

Paul believes the results indicate that at a time when workers still report concern about job security, we can expect them to warm in an election period to a Labor Party that shows they share their views, rather than a Liberal Party with a WorkChoices Mark II policy.

“Our poll shows that among working people Kevin Rudd far outclasses Tony Abbott by a whopping 44 per cent to 15 per cent, as the one who would do a better job of securing and enhancing better work conditions,” Paul said.

As a result of the poll, the AWU – and other unions – must continue to defend jobs. “That’s what Australian working families expect of us – and trust us to do well,” he said. “And that’s why the AWU will continue to argue that the Government’s stimulus program has been a winner for working people.”

To read Paul’s full address to the National Press Club, please go to www.awu.net.au and follow the link.
AWU Officials and staff were saddened to hear of the death of Jeremy Vermeesch in February this year. Jeremy was a former AWU National Communications Officer and, until last year, the Victorian Branch’s Communications Officer. Previously, Jeremy had been an ACTU Media Officer and a Melbourne-based reporter for Workplace Express.

Jeremy was blessed with remarkable skills as a journalist specialising in industrial relations and politics. His commitment to the Australian trade union movement and global social justice issues was genuine and deep. His kindness, warmth and sense of humour made Jeremy a wonderful friend of which he had many in the Labor movement.

As a mark of respect for Jeremy, his dedication and his professionalism, the AWU is proud to support an Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) initiative to establish an annual award for Communications Excellence in his honour. Jeremy’s passing has highlighted the absence of any formal recognition of industrial relations reporters, and others, working in the media or within the trade union movement. This annual acknowledgement will reward those individuals who make an outstanding contribution in this area.

The award will be open to all Union members, including those working in the media and related industries as well as the Union movement.

AWU Officials and staff send their deepest condolences to Jeremy’s family.

ANNUAL AWARD IN MEMORY OF JEREMY VERMEESCH

AN APPEAL TO UK AWU MEMBERS

THIS year’s federal election is shaping up to be another important battle for Australia’s workers. However, for UK expats, an equally vital fight is going on back home.

Ahead of a general election this year, the Labour Party is falling behind in the polls to a ‘new look’ Conservative Party led by David Cameron.

Despite the fact he campaigned against Labour’s minimum wage and New Deal reforms, Cameron has tried to present himself as a moderate conservative. A look beneath his veneer shows otherwise.

Cameron’s Tories have proposed a raft of changes that will harm Britain’s workers, most recently launching an attack on ‘excessive’ health and safety regulations.

As the Trades Union Congress has pointed out, these regulations are responsible for saving the lives of thousands of workers every year.

Cameron and his anti-Europe colleagues also want to sign Britain out of the European Social Chapter, which guarantees, among other things, maternity leave, annual leave, anti-discrimination rights and gender equality.

Since coming to power Labour has introduced the national minimum wage, greater rights and benefits for working parents, improved assistance for the unemployed and better union recognition rights. Moves which the Tories oppose and will scrap if they get into power.

The election is expected to be the closest in a generation and it is crucial that every vote counts. The most likely date for polling day is May 1, so expats should register their vote and make a stand for fairness back home.

For more information on how to register for a postal or proxy vote visit http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/
SWEET END TO A BITTER DISPUTE FOR BUNDABERG WORKERS

THE LONG and bitter enterprise bargaining dispute between AWU members and their employer Bundaberg Sugar has finally been resolved, with a resounding victory for AWU members.

Workers at the mills in the Bundaberg area had been fighting since February 2009 to hang onto their five days’ leave entitlements during EBA negotiations.

The five days’ leave, known as travel time, is an industry standard for sugar workers in Queensland. Sugar workers first won their entitlement to travel leave by foregoing a pay increase in 1980.

During the crush season, AWU members work long hours to get the sugar cane crushed. The five days’ travel time is used by most workers to spend time with their family.

In response to Bundaberg Sugar’s attempt to take away this long-held entitlement, the AWU began a statewide community campaign.

AWU members in all of the 26 sugar mills across Queensland moved motions of support, and moved resolutions committing to fight any attempt to remove travel leave in their own mills.

The AWU, through its affiliation with the International Union of Food Workers, also wrote to the company’s Belgian owners, Finasucre, asking them to intervene in the dispute.

Hundreds of community members in sugar towns across Queensland signed postcards addressed to Finasucre Managing Director Olivier Lippens, asking him to stop local management from taking AWU members away from their families for an extra week a year.

AWU members in the sugar industry knew that if Bundy Sugar workers lost travel time, it wouldn’t be long before the entitlement was lost across the industry.

AWU members voted overwhelmingly in support of industrial action, and on August 20, stopped work for 24 hours, and began a ban on overtime.

Following this, Bundaberg Sugar attempted to lock AWU members out. AWU members kept fighting though, and the company was forced into a humiliating back-down. Members kept their entitlement, and won a guarantee of two RDOs during the non-crush season.

AWU members have reaffirmed their status as the Queensland sugar industry’s strongest union, with its members ready to fight any attempt to take their travel time away.

CROOK BUSINESS AT BUNDABERG HOSPITAL

PLASTER technicians at Bundaberg Base Hospital are considering their options after a series of meetings between the AWU Queensland Branch and Queensland Health have failed to resolve an ongoing pay dispute.

AWU Queensland Branch Organiser Tony Beers said that Queensland Health’s refusal to recognise the qualifications of the hospital’s plaster technicians could result in industrial action.

“Pay discrepancies of 30 cents an hour between plaster technicians could result in the loss of the out-of-hours plaster service for the Hospital,” he said. “By refusing to pay the extra 30 cents an hour, Queensland Health may force already busy doctors and nurses to perform the out-of-hours plaster service themselves when they should be attending to other patients.”

In a post-Patel era, it is unacceptable to the Union that penny-pinching bureaucrats are putting the residents of Bundaberg at risk of losing their 24/7 access to a plaster service,” Tony continued.

“Doctors and nurses support the recognition of these qualifications because it will allow more time with patients.”
AWU MEMBERS working at Gladstone Regional Council have scored a win over wages, with their employer agreeing to implement changes which reward workers for up-skilling.

AWU members at the depots of Miriam Vale, Calliope and Gladstone passed unanimous resolutions calling on the council to implement changes that would allow for workers to receive cost-of-living increases.

The resolutions were presented at a meeting of Gladstone Regional Council on the January 19, where they were approved by the councillors.

The win means that any worker who is currently working at a pay level higher than their qualification level will be up-skilled to meet the requirements of their position.

All workers will receive a 5 per cent wage rise in line with their EBA, and also an increase in their pay increment.

THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER is set to pursue a nationwide campaign to improve conditions for traffic-control workers following a decision by Queensland Minister for Main Roads, Craig Wallace to regulate the industry.

“This decision by Minister Wallace will make Queensland a leader in terms of traffic control regulation in Australia. The AWU has been pushing hard for this sort of reform in Queensland, and we welcome the Minister’s decision,” AWU Queensland Branch Assistant Secretary Ben Swan said. “There have been too many cowboys in the industry for too long. The AWU will be advocating for delinquent companies to be deregistered and prevented from working on Government-funded works.”

The AWU has been able to increase wages by more than 25 per cent for workers in companies that have negotiated an agreement with the traffic control Union.

“Not only have wages increased in those companies, who are employers of choice in the industry, but working conditions and safety standards have also improved,” Ben said.

Ben said the decision followed the establishment of a taskforce late last year to review a report by the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman. “Traffic control management is critical to the delivery of Queensland’s record infrastructure program and regulation will usher in a new, safer era for traffic control management. “Queensland has approximately 5000 workers in the traffic control industry and this number is set to increase.”

Ben also asked motorists to help traffic controllers do their jobs by obeying traffic signs around road works. “While great steps forward have been taken in safety standards, being a traffic controller is still a very dangerous job. I’d ask motorists to remember that traffic controllers are there making the roads safer for motorists, but they need motorists to help them do that. The last thing anyone wants is a repeat of the tragic loss of a controller in August last year.” Ben said.
NSW NEWS

BUSH FIRE WORKERS BURNT BY GOVERNMENT

NATIONAL Parks bush fire workers are being forced to choose between layoffs and a reduction of pay and conditions.

The NSW Government’s wage policy allows public sector workers a wage increase of 4 per cent in base hourly rate.

However, this raise must be offset by a 1.5 per cent cut to the annual wage budget.

As a result, without cuts to essential fire-fighting services, workers face a wage cut of up to 17 per cent.

AWU Greater NSW Branch Secretary Russ Collison, said: “Neither option is fair or reasonable. Workers face significant pay cuts or fewer workers to fight bush fires which will jeopardise the safety of the community.”

AWU representatives on the negotiating committee have felt frustrated by the lack of options being generated in creating efficiency savings. Management wants to take the easy option of not filling vacancies and generating the greatest cuts from the lowest paid, they said.

SAFETY BEFORE PROFITS

A NEW technique for recarborising steel is on hold, while OneSteel, employees and the Union work to ensure safety at the Rooty Hill Plant.

OneSteel Rooty Hill, in conjunction with the University of New South Wales, had been experimenting with a new method of recarborising steel in the manufacturing process.

The method would use discarded rubber tyres to inject carbon into the steel and, if successful, would reduce landfill waste and result in significant cost savings. Workers, however, were concerned over the impact burning rubber would have on their lungs and the safety of the process. A lack of information, consultation and overall uncertainty lead to the workforce completely rejecting the process.

AWU National OHS Director Dr Yossi Berger and Greater NSW Branch Assistant Secretary Stephen Bali, were called in by Delegates to review the process.

They found workers were willing to assist the company, but had concerns. Dr Berger made several recommendations to OneSteel which, to their credit, they adopted.

Toxicology expert, Dr Chris Winder, has been appointed to monitor the health effects and recommend improvements to the air filtration system.

A steering committee of workers and management has been set up to monitor and administer the new process, giving workers unprecedented access to information and ownership of the process. Trials will take place and it’s hoped the technology will produce a win for the environment and a safe process for workers.

FAIRWORK GIVES UNION A FAIR GO

FAIR WORK is proving to be a step forward for collective bargaining, with Bluescope Steel workers recently voting to invite the AWU Greater NSW Branch to negotiate on their behalf.

On February 8, the Australian Industrial Relations Commissions’ (AIRC) Commissioner Greg Harrison issued a Majority Support Determination in relation to employees of Bluescope Steel Ltd engaged in production at their Arndell Park site.

The Union had presented Fair Work Australia with a petition signed by 19 of 25 employees. This petition was sufficient evidence to establish that a majority of these employees support the AWU in negotiating an enterprise agreement on their behalf. Negotiations for an enterprise agreement will commence shortly.

IN BRIEF

LEIGHTON NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN

THE AWU Greater NSW Branch is in negotiations with Leighton, seeking increases in allowances and income protection.

The Union is seeking a $5 daily increase in travel allowance and an increase in redundancy payments of $20 per week.

The Union would also like to see the company provide for two-year income protection for non-work related injuries.

Leighton is involved in numerous infrastructure projects such as bridges, rail and roads.

IT PAYS TO BELONG

THE AWU Greater NSW Branch has recovered over $30,000 on behalf of two members in the poultry and horticultural industries in regional NSW.

The underpayments involved failure to pay penalty rates and minimum Award wages.
WORKERS with Laing O’Rourke Novo Rail are set to receive increases in wage, allowances and benefits as a result of negotiations between the company and the Australian Workers’ Union.

The company, which undertakes track work throughout Sydney’s rail system, has agreed to a 15 per cent wage increase over three years and a $30 daily travel allowance for its construction workers.

Under the new arrangements, workers would receive $110 per week redundancy payment. Accident and Sickness protection were also agreed to.

AWU Greater NSW Branch Secretary Russ Collison, said: “Income protection gives assurances to workers that, if they’re off injured, a steady income flow will cover house payments and living expenses for the family. “All workers should have it in their log of claims with IUS, who are currently delivering the best outcomes and service to our members,” he said.

AWU Greater NSW Branch Vice-President and Construction Co-ordinator Kevin Brown, believes the offer is below the standard the AWU has been recently achieving.

Kevin’s recommendation was to reject the offer and continue with negotiations.

If workers accept the deal, they would be approximately $20,000 worse off over the next three years, he said.

Despite some gains in negotiations with Abigroup, the AWU Greater NSW Branch Vice-President has recommended against accepting their offer.

Initial negotiations with the construction giant had resulted in an offer of a 4 per cent annual wage increase, a $3 increase in the daily travel allowance and an increase of $7 per week in redundancy payment provisions.

A NEWCASTLE Delegate got a taste of what it would be like to be an AWU Official during a two-week stand-in stint.

Like other Branches of the AWU, Newcastle invites keen Delegates to spend time in the office and act as a fill-in Official.

Newcastle Branch President John Ken was on four weeks’ annual leave, so senior site Delegate, Tom Matheson – employed by DYWIDAG Systems International (DSI) – was given the opportunity to learn the ropes and have a go at the job.

AWU Newcastle Branch Secretary Richard Downie explained the benefits of the placement.

“It does two things,” Richard said. “It gives the Delegate the opportunity to see first-hand what an Official does, an experience they usually don’t forget, and it also allows the Branch to assess Delegates for possible future full-time Organiser positions.”

Tom – who has been a member for 20 years and Delegate for the past 10 – found the job had both its good and bad points.

It didn’t take him long to realise “how good” he and his fellow workers had it compared to some of the less fortunate workplaces he visited.

“While you come to understand the make-up of your own workplace, it was strange and sometimes a little bit difficult dealing with other people in their workplaces,” he said of the experience.

Tom visited several workplaces, including the Tomago Aluminium smelter, OneSteel manufacturing and grinding media sites, and was also involved in the recruitment of new members.

While working as a relief Official, he dealt with a broad range of issues including the incorrect payment of meal allowances and procedural disputes, and assisted Officials in Enterprise Agreement negotiations.

Tom said that while he enjoyed his stint at the Newcastle Branch, he looked forward to going back to “his turf” and help keep improving the wages and conditions of his fellow workers at DSI.

Tom thanked Newcastle Branch Officials and Branch Secretary Richard Downie for the great experience.

“I’d do it again, for sure,” he said.
FORGECAST BOSS STIFFS WORKERS A THIRD TIME

IT’S TEN past six on a Thursday morning. Doug Rice, a retired Forgecast employee of 42 years, is chatting under the tarpaulin with David Phong (from Vietnam) about yesterday’s Fair Work Australia meeting.

Thong Tran (also from Vietnam) is still waking up beside the barbecue after his overnight shift. A fire burns in the old washing machine basin. One by one their comrades trickle in. Carlos Rendich (Chile), 34 years with the company and AWU Delegate, arrives with his brother-in-law Juan Lopez (Chile), 24 years at Forgecast. John Huggert (India) is there like he has been for the past 22 years together with Delegate George Pavlo (Slovakia) 34 years, Cane Sebelbski (Macedonia) 28 years and Goce Arsovksi (Macedonia) 34 years.

This is the place these workers have spent most of their adult lives. The members keep arriving as if clocking on for their shifts except the gates are locked.

Rod Lineham, AWU Organiser turns up. A bus drives past and the driver toots its horn. Today starts the eleventh week of the Forgecast picket line in Cook Road, Mitcham.

The workers look weary. They have not been paid since November, 2009. Their employer, a 71-year-old millionaire named Ian Beynon, has refused to pay their entitlements for the second time in five years and sacked the whole workforce less than a month before Christmas 2009.

The last time his company went into receivership, in 2004, half the workforce lost their jobs. Mr Beynon promised the returning workers he would create a trust fund to secure their entitlements. Those who chose to stay on were forced to accept reduced hours to keep the company afloat but they did so in vain. Mr Beynon lied.

Instead of securing their hard-earned entitlements, he set up another of his own companies as a secured creditor. This means that now Forgecast has gone into liquidation for the third time, Mr Beynon is legally entitled to pay himself before the workers. And it also turns out the workers’ superannuation had not been paid for the past 18 months either.

“The laws need to be changed to stop people like Ian Beynon from ripping off workers,” says Cesar Melhem, AWU Victorian Branch Secretary.

Mr Beynon owes his workers $4.4 million in entitlements but he refuses to pay. So how can he get away with it? Corporate law loop-holes have allowed one man to buy back his own insolvent company three times while he claims that it is not he who owes the workers money but the company he owns.

The culturally diverse, strongly united workforce looks grim as the weeks pass with no resolution in sight. Sharing more than 1000 years’ combined service, the picketing workers will fight on until some kind of justice is won.

TANYA’S LIFTING HER GAME

OFFICE Manager Tanya Green is not just a valued Union employee – she’s also taking the weightlifting world by storm.

Tanya has worked in the Union’s Geelong office for nearly five years. At 6.30 every morning, she can be found slogging away in the gym, before heading off to work.

Having taken out the Victorian and Australian Championships for the 53kg class, Tanya is training hard in a bid to represent her country in Ireland in November.

She also hopes to break a world squat record in the 53kg unassisted division, by lifting an impressive 103kg – more than double her weight.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said Tanya was an asset to the Union movement in Geelong, and wished her well. “It’s great to see a young woman pursuing her dream in a traditionally male-dominated sport,” he said.

“Her hard work and commitment to her sport should be applauded,” Cesar said.

CERT IVs FOR OHS REPS

TOGETHER with a bumper calendar of Delegate and Health & Safety Rep training for 2010, the AWU Victorian Branch will again be offering around 16 OHS Representatives the chance to undertake a nationally recognised Certificate IV in OHS.

This Certificate course has been offered to Victorian Health and Safety Reps for over seven years. Trainer Anna Pupillo will deliver her third course for AWU Reps and the Victorian Branch hopes to be able to allow many more members to build their OHS qualifications.

Training and Education Officer Samantha Bond said that in previous years, some of those trained had taken up permanent OHS positions. “Many of our trained Health and Safety Reps (HSRs) have been able to concentrate more directly on OHS issues as a result,” she said.

AWU Victorian Branch Secretary Cesar Melhem said that better trained HSRs resulted in safer workplaces.

“By offering recognised qualifications we continue to enhance the health and safety of our members,” he said.

“We encourage active HSRs to consider applying for a place in next year’s course.”
The AFL season is almost upon us and the great team of Melbourne’s west, the Western Bulldogs, have joined forces with the Australian Workers’ Union to offer AWU Victorian Branch Members exclusive membership benefits at a special discounted rate.

By joining the Blue Collar Club you can see the Bulldogs play at all 11 home games in Victoria for just $140... that’s a saving of $40 off the recommended retail price!

Simply refer to the enclosed flyer and complete the application form (Victorian Branch Members only), log on to www.vic.awu.net.au or contact 1300 GO DOGS (46 36 47), to join today!

This is your opportunity to see a Blue Collar Club, a force to be reckoned with in 2010. Join and become a member today, as the Bulldogs aim to go all the way!

Go Dogs!
VALE – TOM MacDONALD

THE AWU Victorian Branch is saddened to report the passing of long-standing AWU member Tom McDonald in January. Here, Victorian Branch Organiser Sam Beechey celebrates his comrade’s life...

A Union member for over 50 years, Tom lived and worked as a shearer in western Victoria.

Like most shearers, Tom travelled extensively in search of sheep to shear. Februaries would see Tom and his brother Bill, a former AWU Organiser, travel to the South Australian Woomera area in search of work.

Often said to be over 50 degrees in the water bag, Tom and Bill would slave away out there for over six weeks.

When one talks of Tom, invariably Bill is mentioned, such was their relationship. I worked with them both and I’ve never met two stronger and determined men, nor such loyal Unionists.

Bill passed away in 2002. Tom passed away on Australia Day.

Tom never married, but was engaged to Aileen for 46 years. He was regarded as one of the best shearsers of his time and was seldom beaten in his younger days.

The esteem in which his peers held Tom was evident at his funeral. Many of them hadn’t seen since the Wide Comb Dispute of 1983. They’d travelled in from all over the state and beyond to pay their respects.

Tom will be missed by Aileen and his mates, but he has been reunited with other loyal Union shearsers. May they all rest in peace.

UNITED WORKERS

MAKE UP TIME

AWU MEMBERS employed by United Group Ltd on the Shell shut-down won a lost time case through Fair Work Australia recently.

Around 100 AWU Members stopped work following asbestos and other suspect material being found throughout the site.

Although there were arrangements for dealing with asbestos, United didn’t comply with arrangements agreed to between unions and the company.

AWU Members remained ‘shedded-up’ whilst the issues were dealt with. United then refused to pay employees whilst they remained in the sheds.

“Our main priority here was protecting the health and safety of our members. We believed that we had an agreement with the company, but unfortunately the company didn’t comply and we had no choice but to take the matter to Fair Work Australia,” said AWU Geelong Organiser Gavin Penn.

Fair Work Australia affirmed the AWU’s claims and found that while the workers were on-site they should be paid.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA NEWS

UNION HAS AMCOR IN ITS SITES

THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER

UNION HAS AMCOR IN ITS SITES

THE AWU is keen to provide a Union voice for workers at the big AMCOR bottle manufacturing site in South Australia to improve the workplace conditions and to match Union rates other workers in the same industry receive.

“Amcor has been hostile to the Union over many years and keeping it at arms length – they’ve used WorkChoices laws effectively for many years to keep the unions out of the workplace.”

“They want to make it impossible for their 100-plus workers to hear about what the Union can do to make their workplace better over all,” Wayne said.

According to Wayne, the company used underhanded tactics to restrict the Union.

“The company even prevented the Union putting up a noticeboard which advertised the times AWU Organisers would be available to talk to AMCOR employees,” he said.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, the Union is committed to organising the AMCOR site.

“AMCOR, as a hostile anti-union employer, is discounting wages and conditions, to establish a competitive edge against workers who are paid better rates of pay in the same industry, at the expense of their unorganised workforce,” Wayne explained.

“Thanks to the new Fair Work laws we now have our foot in the door at Amcor and we will campaign hard, pry it open and end the oppressive conditions at AMCOR,” Wayne said.
DELEGATE TRAINING: TEACHING OLD DOGS NEW TRICKS

THANKS to training, AWU Stewards, Delegates and activists in WA now have a greater understanding of the Fair Work Australia Act.

The AWU West Australian Branch held a number of Delegate training programs last year, so Stewards, Delegates and activists could become familiar with Fair Work Australia legislation, protocols and changes.

Led by AWU Training Coordinator Kathleen Galvin, the Delegates worked on a wide variety of skills they will be able to use back at their workplaces – structured conversations, mapping, understanding and using Fair Work, their rights and obligations as Delegates and developing the AWU ‘Stronger Together’ message.

AWU Growth and Campaign Organiser Matt Dixon said it was great to have such an active and enthusiastic group of Stewards, who were going to put what they had learnt into action.

“The Stewards are from the shops where the Branch is running growth or EBA campaigns. With these skilled Stewards on the ground we're in a better place to build Union strength,” he said.

AWU West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price, who attended both training days, said that the Union is training the next generation of Delegates and activists. “Conferences for Delegates and Stewards are only one part in training, we'll still be out every week and giving them protocols and changes.”

HONOURING THOSE WHO BUILT THE UNION

DURING a recent visit to Western Australia, AWU National Secretary Paul Howes honoured one of Alcoa's longest-serving Delegates.

In his address, Paul celebrated the work of Barry Coates, former mine operator and Deputy Convenor at Alcoa Huntly for over 33 years.

Workers can’t remember anyone being a senior Delegate there for as long as Barry. With countless disputes settled, numerous safety breaches resolved and thousands of Members recruited and mentored, Barry’s value to the Union cannot be underestimated.

“Without Barry’s dedication and tireless work the AWU Alcoa Combined Sites Committee would not be as strong as it is today,” Paul said. “With over 135,000 members nationwide, we, as a union, need to take time to acknowledge the achievements that our members make, and honour their service to this great Union.”

During Barry’s time as a senior Delegate for Alcoa Huntly, he has seen many changes. With the merging of both the Huntly and Del Park operations and, from 2000 onwards, the closure of the Jarrahdale mine site, Huntly has grown to become the largest bauxite mine in the world.

“When I took over as Convenor Secretary at Alcoa Huntly, without Barry’s support and knowledge of the site, it would have been a lot harder for me to work within that role,” AWU Alcoa Huntly Convenor Simon Price said.

AWU West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price also had the opportunity to thank Barry. “AWU Alcoa has always been at the heart of the AWU West Australia Branch. Members like Barry have stood by us through thick and thin and it's great to see Barry reach this milestone,’ Stephen said.
FRONTLINE NEWS WEST AUSTRALIA

STAUNCH MEMBERS THANKED AT AGM

IN DECEMBER 2009 the AWU West Australian Branch held its required annual general meeting (AGM).

Chaired by WA Branch President Andy Hacking, formally of Alcoa, the full complement of Executive and Life Members attended to hear about the AWU’s operations over the past year and pay homage to two valued members.

Thanks went to two stalwarts of the WA Branch, John and Betty Blaasch, who have stuck by the AWU through thick and thin.

John, a Life Member of the AWU, and formerly a gold miner in the Kalgoorlie goldfields, has been a staunch member of the Union for 30 years.

His support for the Union is only rivaled by Betty, his wife, an honorary member, who used to help staff the Union’s Kalgoorlie Goldfields Office.

AWU West Australian Branch Secretary, Stephen Price, gave a special mention to John and Betty at the meeting.

“Once again, I would like to thank John and Betty Blaasch for attending the AGM,” he said.

“Your input, support and assistance to this Union throughout your years, has really gone un-matched by anyone else that I know of. On behalf of the AWU and all of its members, thank you.”

TOGETHER THEY STAND AT SWAN WATER

AFTER eight months of Union campaigning, Swan Water workers have voted in favour of a new, three-year Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

A ballot on January 2 saw a 100 per cent return, with 71 per cent voting in favour of the EBA which will deliver a 16 per cent pay over three years, and a 6 per cent increase, retrospective to May 1, 2009.

The process has resulted in wins for workers and the Union alike, said AWU West Australian Branch Organiser Terry Paterson.

“It’s a terrific result for Union members, and it’s even better now for the workers at Swan Water, who have a strong, unified workforce,” Terry said.

“When we first started at Swan, it was really difficult for us, but in only a few months, we have great Delegates and a strong membership that has just helped us deliver a solid agreement for the next three years,” he said.

Also arising from a committed negotiation process were improvements to conditions, including a fairer overtime system and the opportunity for workers to gain national accreditation in a variety of operational training areas.

The Union also gained from the process, with the introduction of paid Members’ meetings and monthly Union Consultative Committee meetings.

“The campaign is testament to a workforce that wants to improve their conditions and organise themselves, with help from the Union,” AWU West Australian Branch Secretary Stephen Price said. “The results show what can be achieved when people work in a collective.”

BLITZ ON WESPINE PICKET

A TWO-DAY campaign blitz by AWU West Australian Branch Organisers at the Wespine sawmill near Bunbury resulted in many new Members and provided a welcome boost to workers.

The divisive tactics used by the company led to a situation where the Union was seated at the negotiating table with 45 individuals seeking their own arrangements, making the process slow and practically impossible.

However, thanks to the hard work of Organisers Craig Ramirez, Craig Beveridge and Matt Dixon from the Perth office, the Union increased membership at the site and is starting to build a solid foundation for the new agreement.

“We have had a great response from Members and non-members this morning,” Southwest Organiser Craig Ramirez said on the day. “The guys love seeing the Union out here as early as they are. It shows them we are working hard for them, and also gives us a chance to get a consistent message across the site.”
BREATHE DEEP

THE AUSTRALIAN Workers’ Union is proud to be one of the sponsors of an extraordinary photographic portrait exhibition putting a heart-rending sympathetic focus on the widows who have lost husbands to asbestos-related diseases in Australia.

“Through the faces and eyes of these widows we can read the pain of the scourge of asbestos,” Chris Ireland, the photographer who spent two years on the project, explained.

“I have titled the exhibition BREATHE. Breathe is an imperative – it is what the women must do every day in order to continue. BREATHE also refers to the struggle for breath each sufferer must overcome, and ultimately what they are eventually unable to do.”

Hundreds of Australians die each year from exposure to asbestos. The BREATHE exhibition is concerned with the surviving widows and is dedicated to the men they have lost.

The Tasmanian exhibition – which opened on February 26 at the Moonah Arts Centre – is the fourth leg of a national tour which has already been seen and widely praised in New South Wales and Victoria. In Tasmania the principal sponsors of the exhibition are the AWU, WorkCover Tasmania and the Tasmanian State Government. This self-funded project was made possible with the assistance of Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia and Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support group.

These two asbestos support groups helped find people interested in the portrait project and provided assistance throughout the two years. Chris was motivated to undertake the project because he felt media attention to the issue had often overlooked the widows involved. Fifteen women from Victoria and New South Wales agreed to have their portraits taken.

AWU Tasmanian Branch Secretary Ian Wakefield said the Union was eager to be associated with this wonderful, touching portrait exhibition.

“Our Union is very aware of the catastrophe that has been caused by asbestos and has campaigned for some time to have a prioritised national recall of all asbestos-containing material, in all forms, from across the nation,” Ian said. “The scourge of asbestos has taken a heavy toll on this country already. The AWU is advocating a 'dangerous product' recall. This slow-moving catastrophe has destroyed the lives of thousands of workers and their families – and will kill and maim thousands more over the next 20 years. It has been estimated that ultimately 10 million people worldwide will be killed by asbestos,” Ian said.
Low fees

At Sunsuper, it’s super simple. Low fees. No commissions. Our profits go back to our members. Phone 13 11 84 or visit sunsuper.com.au

You look after your life. We’ll look after your super.
Scott McDine

Scott McDine is a West Australian and after completing high school back in 1987, I spent the following year at the beach and doing odd jobs. After that, I found my way down to Pinjarra and commenced work at the Alcoa Alumina Refinery in early 1989.

Both my mum and my dad’s families came out of the coalmines near Newcastle in the north east of England, so I’ve always had an interest in unions and social justice issues. It was only natural, then, that I became an AWU Delegate back in the early 1990s.

In 1997 I transferred across to the Refinery’s Central Maintenance department as a serviceperson and it wasn’t too long before I was the AWU Delegate again. This time for Shift ‘F’ on the 12-hour continuous shifts in Central Maintenance.

In 2001 I was elected to the position of Vice President on the AWU Pinjarra Refinery Executive, which was certainly an interesting time. Alcoa was embarking on a cost challenge, which meant we faced a number of redundancies. I continued in my role until 2005, when I was then elected President of the Executive and, later in the year, was also elected to the AWU West Australian Branch Executive.

During the Union’s National Conference in February of 2007 (the now National Secretary, Paul Howes, offered me a full-time position with the Union based in the Pilbara in Western Australia’s north west. So, after 18 years, I pulled up stumps with Alcoa World Alumina and spent the next 11 months living in Port Hedland.

Then Paul offered me my next role as a National Organiser based out of the Union’s National Office in Sydney. Coming from Mandurah in the South of Perth to Port Hedland, then across the continent to Sydney was a big switch, but I was ready for the challenge.

I spent the first 18 months mainly looking after the interests of the Union’s members in the aviation industry and working on a range of industrial agreements. Then, in December 2009, I was elected Assistant National Secretary of the Union, which is something I would never have considered back in the early ‘90s when I was the Delegate on the job back West.

Now my role includes looking after the steel and mining industries, as well as the implementation and application of the Fair Work Act relating to the AWU, liaising with the ACTU, the National OH&S Harmonisation agenda and the Award Modernisation process which, aside from a number of outstanding variations, is finally nearing completion.

Outside of my work with the Union, I have always taken an active interest in sport. After moving to Sydney it quickly became apparent that getting Foxtel connected was a must. Coming from the West AFL is the game. I used to play with my local team, the Mandurah Mustangs. Now, for some reason, I find that there’s all this rugby league on TV! Having said that, you end up getting used to it.

Another new-found (and enjoyable) habit is relaxing with the form guide down at one of the many local pubs in the Sydney suburb of Balmain on a Saturday afternoon. And in the AWU, there is never any shortage of anyone offering a tip or two!
was urged to join the AWU in 2003 and, after joining, went to some meetings and they were really interesting. The Delegate at that time was forthright and would say when she felt matters were a waste of the Union’s time, or if they were worth pursuing.

I left Compass, where I was working, but returned in 2008 and now work as a utility in catering for the mines here in Newman, Western Australia. We are in the Pilbara and presently endure heat of up to 47 degrees in the shade.

On my return to the company, I rejoined the Union straight away and was then elected as a Delegate. I’m also the safety rep, which is beneficial to the cause, and work alongside another AWU Delegate who is in the company’s cleaning area.

My knowledge of the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), under which we are employed, and the fact that I communicate well with staff from various cultural backgrounds helped us in winning a case, last July, for back pay for permanent part-time staff who weren’t being paid their due overtime.

A staff member had an issue with their pay, based on their contract. They were employed as permanent part-time, for 20 hours a week Monday to Friday, but they were actually working around 30 hours or more a week.

Through research and discussions, I managed to establish that the company was incorrect in its assumption it could utilise staff for up to 38 hours a week under the contract, without paying penalties or overtime. The contract’s wording was at fault: it had left its definition at permanent part-time and not specified the days and hours that people were expected to work.

This gave us a good victory, and it recouped for workers a lot in unpaid overtime allowances.

As it is closely linked to the EBA, I am also familiar with the cleaning and catering award. This is important as I’m able to explain to my co-workers their rights and entitlements and help sort out any workplace issues they may have.

My husband of 24 years is an ore-processing technician with BHP and we have five children – three boys.

My husband recently took a course to become a wildlife carer for injured native animals, and we are presently caring for two kangaroos – pouch ‘roos whose mothers had been killed in road accidents – and a galah with a curled beak.

When birds like this injure their beak or are attacked and can’t shorten their beak by rubbing it on a tree, it grows like gnarly toe nails and then they can’t eat properly. We feed the bird wild bird-seed and the two kangaroos are fed on muesli, rabbit food, and grass.

We also have Rocky, a male wallaby close to release, who has been with us for four years. He presently has an injured arm. Leah, a female wallaby, is blind and has been with us for a year but can never be released. The entire household helps look after our animals.

Accommodation in Newman is scarce and expensive and our house is filled to the brim, but we are happy. The animals live inside while they are helpless, then move out to our backyard, which we have tried to establish as a natural landscape for them. We still have to contend with issues that cause them to become stressed and to injure themselves such as dogs, cats and unexpected noises.

We also have two cats, six goldfish, a ferret, a guinea pig and a dog.

Surprisingly, all the animals get on well!

I’m currently on stress leave and have been working with the Union since November to get this sorted. Under-staffing at our site had required people to put in excessive hours and some staff to attempt duties beyond their capabilities. The workload took its toll, but the Union assisted with notification of my rights and is now liaising with the company’s insurers on my behalf, in an attempt to prevent my stress levels worsening.

Many people are not aware of their rights under WorkCover. If you hurt yourself, the insurance company must be notified and you should get a letter of acknowledgement from them, even if it is a minor injury and does not currently affect you in your work. There may be problems later for which you are entitled to claim.

The Union assists in contract and EBA negotiations, workplace equality and safety. If it wasn’t for the Union I believe many workers would not be aware of their rights. As workers, we can only benefit if we stand united and work together with the Union and our employers.

NAME: Toni Lee Burns

JOB: Utility, mine site catering industry, Western Australia

AND... a happily married mum with five children and a wildlife menagerie!
Queensland’s AWU Northern District Secretary is no stranger when it comes to fighting for workers’ rights, but Rod “Cowboy” Stockham is a knockout in other quarters, too, as Michael Blayney discovers.

Queensland’s AWU Northern District Secretary is no stranger when it comes to fighting for workers’ rights, but Rod “Cowboy” Stockham is a knockout in other quarters, too, as Michael Blayney discovers.  Photo: Getty Images
Very few Australian homes can match the one distinctive feature of Rod Stockham’s two-storey house in the northern Queensland town of Majors Creek: Cowboy’s entire ground floor comprises a fully-fledged boxing gymnasium, ring and all!

“It’s a high-blocked place, so it made sense,” explains Cowboy, full-time AWU Northern District Secretary and spare-time boxing trainer when he’s at home.

“We’ve had the show going for the past five years and it works well for us.”

Stingers Boxing Club is located about 50 kilometres from Townsville, attracting up to 20 men and women three evenings a week. The ages range from kids as young as eight and “oldies” in their 40s. One keen soul regularly travels from Charters Towers, some 110 kilometres away, for a workout.

“We always have a stable of half a dozen amateur competition fighters on tap,” Cowboy says, sharing the training duties with his 19-year-old son Bobby. In fact, Bobby won an Australian title at 13 years of age, with his old man in the corner enjoying “the proudest moment of my life”.

Cowboy’s pugilistic passion was ignited knocking around Townsville’s Police Citizens’ Youth Club as a 12-year-old. He fought as an amateur “many, many years ago”, and fronted up dozens of times at travelling tent shows. “I probably won more than I lost,” he says, with a laugh.

Twenty years later, and Cowboy is quick to point out that the gym is by no means a money-making venture. “I’m out of pocket big time,” he says. “I reckon we’re the cheapest boxing gymnasium in the state. We charge $10 a family membership for a year, and $2 every session. We also chip in with barbecues throughout the year.

“We’re definitely not in it for the money, I just love the sport and I love being able to help people.”

Cowboy and his chargers often travel to tournaments throughout northern Queensland. One weekend he could be in Mackay or Mount Isa; the next, his boxers will be chasing valuable centre-ring experience on Palm Island or as far north as Cairns. Later this year, the national titles will be held in Tasmania, and Cowboy’s frantically raising funds to fly his fighters down south.

“We sell raffle tickets for meat trays every Saturday at the Stuart Hotel [in Townsville]. It’s important because we need that money for the travel. When we go away, the club pays for food, accommodation, travel expenses, the lot.”

Over the journey, Stingers – and Cowboy as trainer – has been responsible for many success stories, the latest being Jordan Gee-Hoy, currently an Australian top 10 in the professional rankings.

“It’s pretty fulfilling. Kids that otherwise would’ve been wayward have been given a purpose in life. I get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing people turn things around. The AWU job can be a fairly strenuous, stressful affair, while the boxing is relaxing and it keeps me in condition.”

Cowboy’s work as Secretary has recently taken him to Switzerland and Indonesia. Representing the AWU at the foundation conference of Indonesia’s Federation of Independent Tobacco, Cane and Sugar Workers’ Union was a real eye-opener for him. “The best-paid sugar worker in Indonesia is on the equivalent of $3 a day. That just blew me away.”

In his AWU position, Cowboy often applies some of the principles he’s learnt in the ring, especially when negotiating on behalf of his members. “Boxing has taught me discipline, respect, and quick thinking, but it’s much more than that. We get kids who think they can box because they’ve been in thirty street fights or whatever.

“But it’s a whole different ball game in that boxing ring. There’s no backing out. Two men, one ring, no escape. Win, lose or draw, every person that climbs through those ropes is a champion in my opinion. It takes a big heart to get into the ring.”
MONEY FOR NOTHING
Executive packages have been hot news lately. And is it any wonder? Aaron Bertram finds that while the rest of us battle to keep up with the cost of living, it’s a pretty high life for those at the “big end of town” – no matter how much they balls things up!

Most jobs have their little perks: the odd biro snuck home in a shirt pocket; a bottomless cup of International Roast; perhaps a few cubes of Kraft cheddar on a toothpick and half a chipped mug of cask plonk at the Christmas do.

Then there are those other jobs. Jobs where anything goes: limousines, private jets, platinum Amex; wild, unjustifiable salaries and massive bonuses – even when you cock things up. That’s life at the very top of Australian industry – the executive echelon – where just turning up and achieving even limited success garners rewards that are, in practical terms, infinite.

The average weekly full-time private sector salary in Australia, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, is $1201.90 per week. Over a 40-year working life, this amounts to a little under $2.5 million. “May I have it in advance?” you ask. “No.”

The case of Sol Trujillo, former chief executive of Telstra, has become a cautionary tale of corporate excess in this country. Even former Prime Minister John Howard (remember him?) regarded Sol’s $3 million pay rise in 2007 as unreasonable and an abuse of the capitalist system.

The case of Sol Trujillo, former chief executive of Telstra, has become a cautionary tale of corporate excess in this country. Even former Prime Minister John Howard (remember him?) regarded Sol’s $3 million pay rise in 2007 as unreasonable and an abuse of the capitalist system.

When Mr Trujillo generously sacked himself early last year, he flew back to the United States (with plenty of leg room, one would expect) $40 million richer, most of it in cash. Now, that’s a shirtload of tostadas for four years’ work. Never mind that Trujillo’s reign over Australia’s largest telco saw the company shed some $25 billion in value, while thousands of workers also lost their jobs.

But Trujillo is not the only one to receive more than his due. After just 14 months in the top job at BHP Billiton, chief Marius Kloppers’ remuneration rose over $3.5 million from around $6.9m to $10.4m. Over that time, he cut 6000 jobs from the world’s largest mining company’s global operations, half of them in Australia. In that year, profits dropped 61 per cent. There’s no real way of telling if a two-year-old could do a better job, but you gotta wonder if maybe it’s time to give one a go.

Pundits lay much of the blame of the so-called “global financial crisis” on executives who have put more stock in short-term profit blitizes than the long-term well-being of the companies they run, of their shareholders, and certainly of their workers.

Devotees of rampant capitalism will tell you that when it comes to management talent, you get what you pay for. Unless we offer our top bananas big bikkies, they’ll leave the country. “Is that a promise?” you ask. “No.”

In Japan, chief executives are paid an average of around $1.7 million,
WHAT ON EARTH!

compared with our national average of $2.3 million, so rest assured they certainly won't be skipping off to Japan anytime soon.

Chief executive pay in greater Europe is roughly on par with Australia (hardly worth the move), but higher in the United Kingdom. In the US, the situation is much more extreme, but even there calls to limit their rewards are growing louder.

It’s claimed that in 2008, the chief executive of McDonald’s in the US made 770 times more than the guys flipping the patties. And this, while the company's been “encouraging” its staff to oppose the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill still being considered by Congress which would give employees more freedom to form, join and assist labour organisations. Doesn't that give you the McShits?

In the wake of the global financial crisis, a backlash against extravagant salaries is rippling across the world. Here, the Productivity Commission recently made a gelded attempt to curb the extravagance by placing more power in the hands of shareholders and making boards of directors subject to closer scrutiny.

But the Commission has only touched the surface. Interests are heavily vested, and any real progress in attempting to trim the fat will be nothing short of a miracle.

THE SHAREHOLDERS’ ASSOCIATION VIEW

Upon the release of Productivity Commission’s final report, CEO of the Australian Shareholders’ Association Stuart Wilson said he was pleased with the final recommendations.

In his column in The Australian, (January 12, 2010) he opined that to suggest there was nothing wrong in the world of CEO was ‘laughable’, but agreed with the view that the original recommendations handed down in the draft went a little too far.

The sensible middle ground had been found, he wrote:

“Overall, the thrust of the recommendations remains intact: to give shareholders greater ability to assess the pay practices of listed companies and the information and power to act when they are displeased, and to give companies the structures needed to best tackle the setting of pay for senior management.”

This duck walks with crutches.
Super is about saving. So it makes sense to be with a fund like AustralianSuper that is run only to profit members, doesn’t pay dividends to shareholders or commissions to agents, and has low fees.

As one of the largest industry super funds AustralianSuper looks after the retirement savings for over 1.4 million everyday Australians.

Put us to work for you. Call 1300 300 273 or go to www.AustralianSuper.com

“I like AustralianSuper because they’re an industry fund run only to profit members.”

Mark Sinclair, AustralianSuper member
Aidan Ormond talks to Ronni Kahn whose organisation, OzHarvest, feeds thousands of needy Australians. Now she’s earned a well-deserved honour. Photos: OzHarvest

Seven years after her “call to action”, Ronni Kahn was honoured as a Local Hero at the 2010 Australia Day awards. Her story is that of a woman galvanised by her past and driven to help the needy as founding director of food-rescue charity OzHarvest.

The OzHarvest story began in 2003 with a trip to visit a mentor-friend in Soweto, South Africa. “We’re driving along and my friend said, ‘By the way, I was responsible for the electricity in Soweto.’ That blew me away,” Ronni, at the time a successful businesswoman in Australia, explains. “I was with someone who, through her actions, had created such an enormous change to so many people.”

What’s more, the friend, Dr Selma Browde, had set up clinics to help educate women and disseminate information through their communities.

“...I was with someone who, through her actions, had actually created such an enormous change to so many people.”

RONNI KAHN

It was an easy decision for Ronni. Something needed to be done, so she did it.
LOCAL HERO

Expressions of appreciation for Ronni’s work.

Aldi supermarkets are a supporter of OzHarvest.

Preparations underway for a big delivery.
Head to www.ozharvest.org.au for more on the charity and how you can help, including making small recurring donations.

A donor hands over a tray of food to an OzHarvest driver.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Recipients include homeless shelters and Youth Off The Street programs. Women in Crisis also receive a regular OzHarvest delivery.

Gerry Deevy, catering manager at Sydney’s Matthew Talbot Hostel for homeless men, puts on 600 meals a day. OzHarvest has visited twice a week for the last six years with delicious, healthy snacks.

“Many clients are on medication and have low immune systems, so healthier food helps medication stay in them longer,” he points out.

Can you help?

Volunteer casual drivers and administrative help are always needed – particularly for one-off fund-raisers.

“And tell local food outlets they can give us food. Explain we are legitimate,” suggests Ronni.

“And you can also run community drives collecting fruit and veg – OzHarvest vans can collect it.”

about AIDS prevention.

“I was hit with it again,” Ronni recalls. “It was another example of a major contribution to society. It was my epiphany; a call to action.”

Excited, Ronni returned to Australia. She’d always detested food wastage, something she’d seen first-hand in her events-planning business. By chance, she found out about America Harvest. Within days, she was on a plane to the United States and returned with practical knowledge that “food rescue” could work here.

It took 12 months to set up OzHarvest – a non-denominational charity that rescues excess food which would otherwise be discarded and delivers it to hungry mouths. At first, wealthy investors didn’t return her calls. “I don’t like it when people say no to me,” she chuckles, “because I’m going to find every way of getting around it.”

Getting around the legalities of donating food was another important challenge. But after lobbying, the Good Samaritan Law – protecting donors from liability – was changed in a number of states in 2005. At that point, Ronni says, it changed the face of food rescue.

From one van delivering 4000 meals a month, the charity has grown to more than 5000 meals per day delivered by six refrigerated vans to over 160 charities across Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra.

OzHarvest has around 700 food donors such as bakeries, wholesalers, corporate boardrooms and even film sets. This list includes Boost Juice Bondi Beach, FBI Radio and the Indigenous Land Corporation. As a result, OzHarvest’s work allows fellow charities to redirect valuable resources to other areas which, as Ronni has detected, is needed now more than ever. “Our agencies have said that they are seeing more workers with ‘food insecurity’.

“They are not enough to cover mortgages and food,” she says.

Brimming with delight, Ronni adds that in five years her charity has saved the equivalent of 1020 cars from the road and 1.5 million kilograms of food that has filled stomachs rather than landfill (see ozharvest.org.au for all the environmental statistics).

And waste is not just confined to kitchens, with OzHarvest now eyeing that lying in fruit and vegetable packing sheds. “It’s appalling,” she argues, “that it should be thrown away when there are people who are in need. We’d love contact with people in the field who can help us source fruit and vegetables.”

Born in apartheid-era South Africa, Ronni left aged 17 disgusted by its regime of racial discrimination (“it was painful”). She then spent over a decade on a kibbutz in Israel.

“It’s about sharing, socialism and living in a community,” she says of her time in Israel. “We are all taught to be equal... [and that] everybody deserves an equal go is basic to my values.”

These core attitudes continue to power Ronni. Her 2010 Australia Day award – acknowledging extraordinary contributions made by Australians in their local community, an honour she describes as “surreal” – has helped enormously with OzHarvest awareness.

Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane are also on Ronni’s rescue radar while the project is set to expand soon into Newcastle. And a 2009 grant from the Vodafone World of Difference program has enabled Ronni to work full-time at OzHarvest’s offices.

Looking ahead, a food-rescue “blueprint” enabling individuals and groups to set up their own programs is planned. It’s part of a continuing mission about educating recipients about food and nutrition, donors about food management and individuals about food waste.

“I set out to make sure I had created a legacy,” the daughter-in-law of Holocaust survivors adds. “When people say I inspire them it’s because I interpret inspire in its literal translation of ‘in spirit’. So if I can get people to be in spirit with me, to do good deeds, I’m enormously proud.” W
Thinking of retiring?

Regular income in your retirement with a First State Super income stream may be the answer.

First State Super income streams:

■ Concessionally taxed income up to age 60, then tax free income from age 60
■ No entry fees or commissions and low charges
■ Ranked the Best fee deals across all retirement funds*
■ Choose from 11 investment strategies and flexible income payment options

Make your money work with FSS Financial Planning

If you would like personal financial advice, why not give FSS Financial Planning a call on 1800 665 756 and arrange an appointment with one of their experienced financial advisers.

Join us for a FREE seminar!

Our popular transitioning to retirement seminar is FREE and will explain to you how you can take advantage of the new rules by giving you clear answers to questions like:

■ How can I put more into super without reducing my income?
■ What are my options for receiving income before retirement?
■ What is ‘Salary Sacrifice’ and how can it improve my super savings and tax position?

To find out more about our seminars visit www.firststatesuper.com.au and click ‘Seminars’ in the left-hand menu. Alternatively, please call us on (02) 9238 2523.

*Selecting super, a company for Rainmaker Information Pty Limited ABN 86 095 610 996, describes the best overall fees payable, where overall fees are calculated for a member with an initial deposit of $100,000 and receives 12 monthly pension payments all invested in the fund’s default investment option. Research dated June 2009.

- Neither FSS Trustee Corporation nor First State Super is responsible for any advice given to you by Q Invest Limited ABN 35 063 511 580 AFSL Number 238274 trading as FSS Financial Planning.

*Consider the First State Super Product Disclosure Statement having regard to your own situation before deciding whether to become a member or continue membership. A copy is available by calling us or visiting our website. The information contained in this document is current as at January 2010. Prepared by FSS Trustee Corporation ABN 11 118 202 672, AFSL 293340, the trustee of First State Superannuation Scheme ABN 53 226 460 385.
Bindi & Ringer love fruit and vegetables because they know they’re good for them. Do you eat up all your fruit and veg? If not, you should! Bindi & Ringer have made a list of just some of the many yummy fruit and vegies that they love to eat.

Hidden in the grid are the names of some fruits and vegetables. They run vertically, horizontally and diagonally – in either direction – and some letters have been used more than once. Tick the box on the list below when you have found a name, then cross it out in the grid. When you have crossed out all the names, the left over letters will spell out a message from Bindi & Ringer.

Solution: Fruit and veg rock!
IUS Group Income Protection
Insurance for AWU members?
Two thumbs up!

The AWU and IUS:
Working together to protect members.

PS:
IUS has paid more than 21,000 income protection claims
and more than $350,000,000 in benefits to Australian
working families.

If you would like more information, please call your local IUS Client Relations Manager:
Victoria: Eamonn Cuddihy 0408 992 205  NSW: Sean Pendleton 0417 171 030
South Australia: Harry Early 0413 612 551  Queensland: Jodie Bechara 0425 272 705
Western Australia: Sean Pendleton 0417 171 030

International Underwriting Services Pty Limited
ABN 32 074 494 885  AFSL 237881
Phone: 1300 651 450 or, 02 8912 7200  Fax: 02 9954 1750  E: info@ius.com.au  W: www.ius.com.au
Level 20, Northpoint 100 Miller Street North Sydney NSW 2060 Australia
Postal: PO Box 6215 North Sydney NSW 2060 Australia
The Rudd Government: Working hard to build Australia’s future

Here are just some of the Rudd Government’s achievements in the last 2 years:

- Acting decisively to support jobs and small businesses during the Global Recession.
- Keeping Government finances strong with Australia retaining its AAA credit rating.
- Funding 1,000 new nurse training places to ensure patients get the care they deserve.
- Supporting record investment in solar and wind power to protect our environment for future generations.
- Abolishing WorkChoices and restoring fairness to the workplace.
- Helping secure our water supplies by providing funding to help build recycling, desalination and stormwater harvesting projects.
- Helping the health of the Murray-Darling by implementing the first ever purchase of water entitlements by the Federal Government.
- Investing in new cancer research and treatment centres.
- Funding a 30% increase in GP training places to help address a shortage, especially in regional and rural areas.
- Creating 130,000 new training places & granting 290,000 new computers for schools.
- Establishing a single national school curriculum with a focus on the basics: reading, writing and arithmetic.
- New Trades Training Centres in our High Schools to give kids practical skills for work.
- Tax cuts for working families.
- Record infrastructure investment in roads, highways, hospitals & schools. There are currently more than 28,000 infrastructure projects underway.
- The largest schools building program ever to ensure our children have a better place to learn.

“I’m optimistic about Australia’s future. Our nation has led the world getting through the Global Recession and we’re preparing Australia for the challenges of the future.”
Kevin Rudd Prime Minister of Australia.