

AMWU

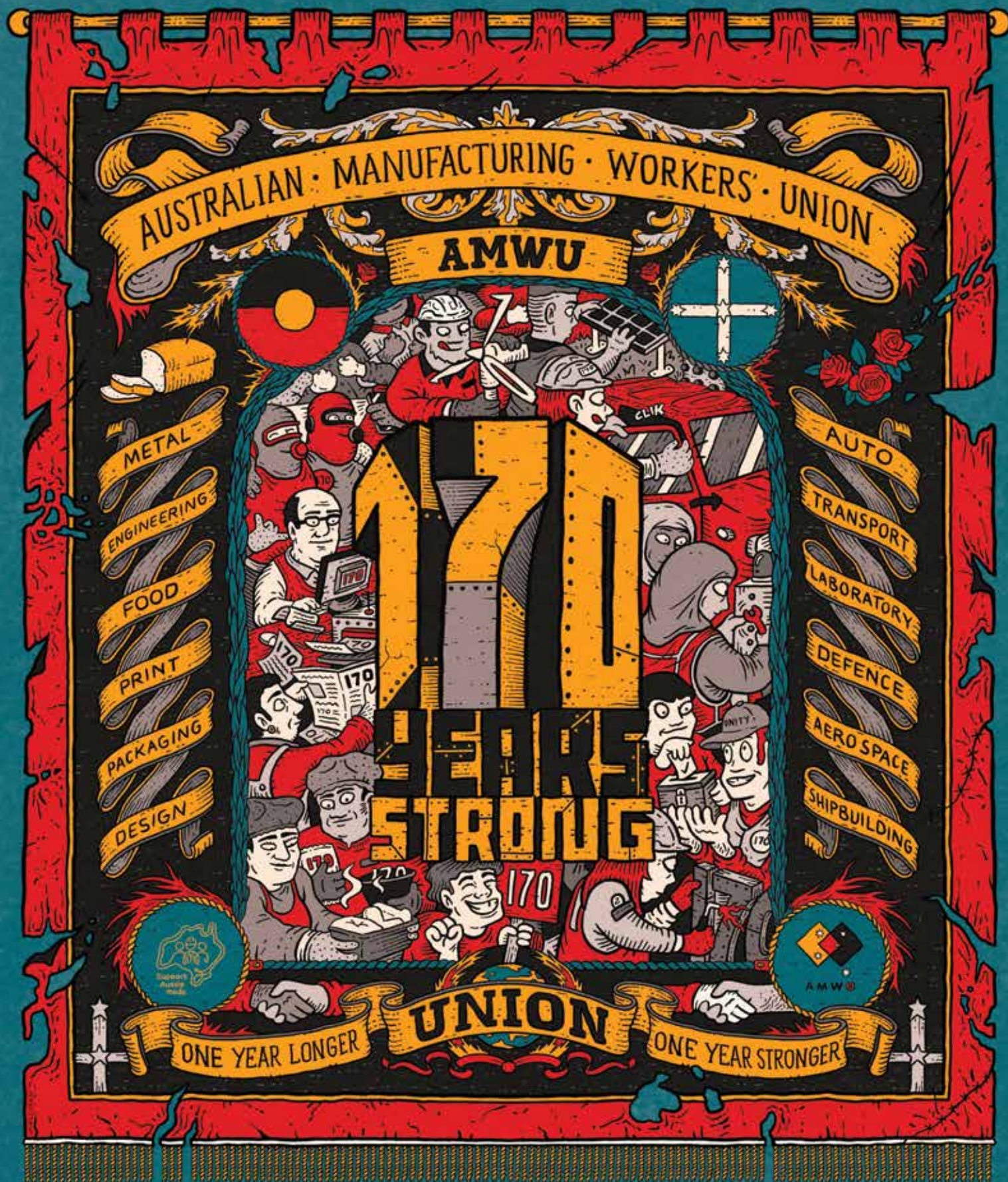
News

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union



AMWU

Spring 2022





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At 30 08/20

Editorial

By the time you read this, the federal government's Jobs and Skills Summit on 1 and 2 September will have been and gone. You'll also have seen what we argued for at the summit and in the leadup to it.

Our main demands have been:

1. A target of 800,000 new manufacturing jobs as part of a larger push towards full employment
2. A 36-hour industry work week with no reduction in pay
3. Lowering the age of retirement and pension access for manufacturing workers from 67 to 65.

There are solid reasons for each of these priorities. Before the last election, the Labor Party committed to rebuilding Australian manufacturing, including a \$15.2 billion reconstruction fund as part of its Covid recovery plan. As Australia moves towards renewable energy, there is a huge opportunity to establish world-leading solar and wind industries in communities that have traditionally relied on fossil fuels.

But if this strategy to "rebuild" manufacturing just involves throwing public money at the biggest companies, it will fail. Any plan to bring manufacturing back can only succeed if workers and their rights are at the centre of it.

If the manufacturing sector becomes synonymous with secure, well-paid jobs and decent conditions, people will want to do the work. If manufacturing is seen as a dirty, dangerous and poorly paid line of work, people will stay away. Corporations will cry wolf about a "skills shortage", import and exploit cheap labour on dodgy visas, and the industry will become Uberised.

That's why we've focused on getting a 36-hour working week. This isn't some new, untested idea we've pulled out of nowhere. All over the world, workers are fighting for reduced working weeks that give them more freedom to live their lives and reclaim their time. A 36-hour working week without a reduction in wages would be an hourly wage rise of more than 5.5 per cent.

After more than two years of pandemic, lockdown, and global uncertainty, a shorter work week would also give manufacturing workers some desperately needed breathing space. The last few years have been exhausting. I don't mean that metaphorically – workers have been working longer and less predictable hours on top of added childcare responsibilities and struggling with the rising cost of living.

Tired and stressed workers are more likely to make mistakes and more likely to get hurt. If there has been one silver lining to come out of Covid, it's that workers have realised they don't need to be at the boss's beck and call every hour of the day to get their work done. Taking back our time is core union business.

That's another reason why we want to lower the retirement age from 67 to 65. Manufacturing is hard, physical work. It takes a toll on the body. A young person deciding on their career doesn't want to be flogging themselves into their late sixties.

If we can achieve these conditions industry-wide, the rebuilt manufacturing industry that the government has promised will look even better than the one the Liberals tried to destroy. A worker-centred manufacturing boom is what this country needs. Let's go get it.

Solidarity.

Steve Murphy
AMWU National Secretary



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AMWU News Spring 2022

The AMWU News is authorised by the National Secretary of the AMWU, Steve Murphy.

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1852 AMWU
OUR UNION IS THE OLDEST IN AUSTRALIA, BUILT FROM 72 UNIONS COVERING THE FULL SPECTRUM OF WORKERS AND 170 YEARS OF WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES.
ALL OF OUR WORK & ORGANISING TAKES PLACE ON ABORIGINAL LAND, WHERE SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED. ALWAYS WILL BE.

1880-90
FIRST AWARDS: 48-HOUR SIX-DAY WEEK BECOMES STANDARD. ASE ENFORCES OWN RATES OF PAY AND CONDITIONS.

1890
THE MARITIME STRIKE - LARGEST STRIKE IN PRE-FEDERATION AUSTRALIA - BEGINS. ASE FINANCIALLY SUPPORTS STRIKING UNIONS & REFUSES TO WORK "BLACK SHIPS".

1916
FEMALE CONFECTIONERS (SEPARATE TO UNIONS FORMED IN 1883).

1917
THE GREAT STRIKE BEGINS. WORKERS AT EVELEIGH RAILWAY WORKSHOPS AND TRAMSHEDS DOWN TOOLS IN PROTEST OF NEW WORKING CONDITIONS.

1923
WOMEN CARDBOARD BOX MAKERS UNIONISE IN WA, AGITATING FOR PAY RISE, A SHORTER WORK WEEK & PAID LEAVE - MOST OF WHICH THEY WIN.

1927
AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING UNION WINS 44-HOUR WEEK AFTER FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PREVIOUSLY LEGISLATED TO STOP IT.

1937
AFTER 14 YEARS' AGITATION, WORKERS WIN ONE WEEK'S PAID LEAVE IN PRINTING & TWO WEEKS FOR SHIFT WORKERS.

1942
AEU & AUESA ADMIT WOMEN AS FULL MEMBERS.

1944
PRINTING INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES UNION IN SYDNEY STRIKES FOR 40-HOUR WEEK & 4 WEEKS ANNUAL LEAVE. WORKERS REFUSE TO PRINT SCAB PAPER.

1948
40-HOUR WEEK BECOMES STANDARD IN MOST INDUSTRIES. RANK & FILE AEU MEMBERS ORGANISED ESCALATING INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN PRECEDING YEARS.

1969
LEFT-WING UNIONS LEAD GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST PENAL POWERS USED TO FINE UNIONS FOR MORE THAN A MILLION. PARTICIPATE IN 6 DAYS OF STRIKES IN 6 DAYS. UNION LEADER IS JAILED FOR REFUSING.

1969
FIRST EQUAL PAY CASE WON, WHICH TRADE METAL ALSO PURSUE AND WIN INDUSTRIALLY.

1970
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO CALL FOR AN END TO THE VIETNAM WAR. AEU PEACE COMMITTEE INVOLVED FROM 1960s.

1972
AMALGAMATED METAL WORKERS IN THE FACE OF LIBERAL GOVERNMENT.

1978
AMALGAMATED METAL WORKERS & SHIPWRIGHTS UNION LEAD CAMPAIGN FOR SHORTER HOURS.

1981
AFTER MASSIVE STRIKES ACROSS METAL INDUSTRY, WORKERS WIN 38-HOUR WEEK. SOON APPLIED TO OTHER INDUSTRIES.

1984
FIRST AWARD FOR PROTECTION OF REDUNDANCY RIGHTS AFTER AMWU AND OTHERS MOUNT CASE FOLLOWING 1982-83 RECESSION REDUNDANCIES.

1984
UNION AID ABROAD (APHEDA) CREATED. AMWU ACTIVISTS SENDING SISTER UNION KILUSANG MAYO UNO EACH YEAR.

1985
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS MARCH FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AT PALM SUNDAY PEACE MARCHES.

1986
FIRST AWARDS FOR INDUSTRY, SUPER: METAL, PRINT, VEHICLE, & FOOD UNIONS RECEIVE 3% COMPULSORY SUPER INTRODUCED IN 1992.

1989
METAL UNIONS SIGN FIRST INDUSTRY AWARD RESTRUCTURING AGREEMENT. AMWU WORKS TO ENSURE CORRECT RECLASSIFICATION TO TENS OF THOUSANDS RECEIVING MAJOR PAY INCREASES.

1993
SERIES OF AMALGAMATIONS FROM VEHICLE, FOOD, METAL AND PRINT UNIONS FORMS FIRST "SUPER UNION": THE AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURING WORKERS UNION.

1998
THE WATERFRONT DISPUTE: HOWARD GOVERNMENT MOUNTS MAJOR ASSAULT ON WATERFRONT UNIONS. UNIONS JOIN MUA IN ACTION. SEVERAL AMWU OFFICIALS & MEMBERS ARRESTED.

2003
WORKERS AT MORRIS AT CAN FACTORY MAINLY MIGRANT WOMEN WIN THEIR FIRST COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT AFTER 110-DAY PICKET.

2007
LABOR GOVERNMENT ELECTED AFTER HISTORIC UNION CAMPAIGN - YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK - LEADING TO WORK-BACK TO WORKCHOICES IN 2009.

2007
KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL & UNION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT - FIRST COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT OF ITS KIND - GUARANTEES SUPPORT FOR COUNTRYMEN & WOMEN & BETTERMENT OF CONDITIONS FOR LOCAL WORKERS.

2013
AMWU ENDORSES NEW BARGAINING CLAIM OF 10 DAYS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE. MEMBERS HAVE ALREADY STARTED WINNING IT IN EBAS.

2017
NATIONAL BOYCOTT OF STREETS ICE-CREAM PRODUCTS LED BY AMWU MEMBERS STOPS COMPANYS ATTEMPT TO TERMINATE E.A. AND CUT PAY.

2017
AMWU PROUDLY SUPPORTS MARRIAGE EQUALITY CAMPAIGN.

2019
2-YEAR PICKET OF ESSO'S LONGFORD GAS PLANT - ONE OF THE LONGEST RUNNING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN DECADES - ENDS WITH UNION-BACKED DEAL.

2019-20
COLLIE JUST TRANSITION WORKING GROUP FORMS IN WA & HUNTER JOBS ALLIANCE LAUNCHES IN NSW, FOCUSING ON LOCAL SUSTAINABLE JOBS & INDUSTRIES.

2022
SUPPORT AUSSIE MADE CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES. THE SHOP FLOOR AS ORGANISERS DURING FEDERAL ELECTION WHERE LABOR IS ELECTED.

THE FUTURE
WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A WORKER CENTRED MANUFACTURING BOOM WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF GOOD, SECURE JOBS IN SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES THAT BETTER AUSTRALIANS LIVES.

DIGNITY

DRAWN BY SAM WALLMAN



Celebrating Union Women

The 80th anniversary of women's manufacturing union membership gives us a chance to think back on what union women have achieved – and what lies ahead.

In 1942, the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) and the Association of Architects, Engineers, Surveyors and Draughtsmen of Australia (AAESDA) passed resolutions allowing women industrial workers to join their ranks.

In a special report published in May 1943, the AEU described “the splendid contribution to the national war effort of the women in the engineering industry,” and recommitted itself to the struggle for equal wages that women workers had fought for since before the First World War.

It also included this enthusiastic but patronising assessment of women industrial workers by the Curtin Government's Women's Employment Board:

“It was an amazing revelation to see women who were yesterday working in beauty salons, or who had not previously worked outside their own homes or who had come from the counters of retail stores, or a dozen other industries rendered superfluous by war, who now stood behind mighty machines, operating them with a skill and mastery that was little short of marvellous.”

The report ended by predicting that “in future, women may be expected to exert considerable influence in our Union.”

The next 80 years

80 years have gone by since those resolutions were passed. The 1942 resolution was not the beginning of women unionists in Australia's manufacturing industries – that history stretches back much further. The resolution was itself the product of decades of struggle and advocacy by working women in the face of ignorance, indifference and hostility, both within the male-dominated union movement and wider society.

But it was a major milestone in our movement's history. The modern AMWU's identity as a fiercely progressive and ambitious union that stands for economic, social and environmental justice would not exist if generations of women had not fought to shape it.

There is not enough room in this journal to do the full story of those 80 years justice. Every division, branch and parent union has its own story to tell. To list the union women who raised the AMWU to where it stands today, and describe their achievements and legacies, would take volumes.

Instead, we can look forward to the next 80 years – to the next generation of union women who are shaping the union now and in years to come.

Women lead the way

One of the AMWU's greatest achievements of the last few years has been its work on the Just Transition – the global union movement to support workers and communities in the traditional fossil-fuel industries secure good, well-paid and rewarding work as the world moves towards renewable energy.

Thanks to this work, thousands of workers and their families from the Hunter in NSW to Collie in WA's South West have more stable and hopeful futures. Much of that difficult and painstaking work was quietly led by two young union women on opposite sides of the country – Hannah Smith in NSW and Alex Cassie in WA.

In NSW, the Hunter Jobs Alliance formed in 2019 – an unlikely grouping of unions and environmental groups designed to get past the animosity and deadlock that prevented meaningful climate action in Australia for years. As state and then national campaign coordinator, Hannah undertook the difficult task of bringing together people and groups that were more used to opposing each other than cooperating.

The Hunter Jobs Alliance is now held up as a model of how to help industrial regions manage the change to renewable energy. It has helped secure hundreds of millions of dollars of NSW Government investment in renewable energy manufacturing projects for the Hunter.

Last year, with the support of AMWU Queensland & Northern Territory executive officer Ann-Marie Allan, Shawnee met with Di Farmer, the Palaszczuk government's Training and Skills Minister.

Shawnee told the minister about appalling and sexist treatment she had experienced and witnessed in her workplace – treatment that has forced countless women out of their chosen professions.

In response to Shawnee's experience and many others like it, the minister directed the Queensland Training Ombudsman to investigate the structural barriers faced by women apprentices in male-dominated occupations. The Ombudsman handed down its report in June and recommended that the state government work with industry to raise the levels of female traineeships and apprenticeships across manufacturing, auto trades, furnishing, energy, and the public service.

Formerly the AMWU Women's Forum, the Fearless Festival is an annual jobs fair focused on encouraging women into traditionally male-dominated industries like engineering, construction and trades. Workplaces offer hands-on sample experiences and site visits, while attendees have the chance to meet and question accomplished women in their fields.

Where to next?

While the AMWU celebrates the union women who rose through the ranks to become the faces and voices of their fellow workers, or the women who serve as delegates and workplace representatives, we also have a responsibility to honour the women whose names we don't know.

For every Anne Urquhart or Simone McGurk – who went from the AMWU to serve in federal and state parliaments – there is an uncounted number of women whose work went unrecognised, or was claimed by men

Below (l-r): Fitter and machinist Liza Iversen was awarded the 1989 WC Crooks Award for Most Outstanding NSW Apprentice; Assistant National Secretary (Print and Packaging Membership Area) Lorraine Cassin on the shop floor of Amcor Fibre Packaging Box Hill; outgoing WA Political and Community Organiser Alex Cassie, and long-serving WA officer Jen Pearce; outgoing National Campaign Coordinator Hannah Smith with former long-serving Helpdesk officer Madelaine Knight. Opposite: Union women at an equal pay protest outside Victorian Trades Hall, Melbourne 1969. Credit: Spinifex Press.



A similar story has unfolded across the country. As the state branch's political and community organiser, Alex helped bring together unions, local and state governments, business, and environmental groups to give Collie's industrial workers the support they need as the WA Government moves toward shutting down state-owned coal power stations. (See page 8 for more on Collie's Just Transition.)

Union women are also leading from the shop floor. Shawnee Zinga is an apprentice refrigeration and air-conditioning training mechanic based in Queensland.

The Queensland Government has since adopted all the Ombudsman's recommendations, setting up a dedicated information hotline for apprentices and trainees, providing additional support to apprentices to prevent and address bullying and harassment, and investigating low completion rates for apprentices in female-dominated industries.

Achievements like Shawnee's are among those celebrated at the Fearless Festival in Hobart, which was held in August.

who were less competent but better connected.

There are achievements and victories the union never won, because the women who would have won them exhausted themselves trying to carve out enough space to simply exist as workers, and as unionists, and as women.

None of this is unique to the AMWU. But 80 years on from those original resolutions, women still only make up around 9 per cent of our membership. 55 per cent of our women members have reported experiencing bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, violence, or threats of violence in their workplace.

Until grim statistics like that are in the past, the work remains undone. ●

A Big Transition

Collie in WA has been a coalmining town for nearly 100 years. But as the state moves towards green energy, locals and delegates are working to make sure Collie's future is bright.



For a long time, we've been talking about a 'just transition' for workers in industries that rely on coal, oil and gas. As governments around the world move from fossil fuels to renewable energy, the global union movement is working to make sure that workers and communities aren't left behind when the industries that supported them for decades are gone.

In Australia, that work is more important than ever. Our members in the Hunter, Central Queensland, the Latrobe Valley and elsewhere have endured years of uncertainty. They've watched politicians in Canberra fight about climate change for more than a decade instead of developing a proper national energy policy. Now companies like AGL and BHP are announcing that mines and power plants will close - or bringing closure dates a lot closer.

Workers need to see a real-life example of a just transition that works, not just something on paper. The Hunter Jobs Alliance in NSW has been doing amazing work, mapping out how towns like Singleton and Kurri Kurri will get through the move away from coal.

But our state branch in Western Australia has an even better story to tell.

Doing the hard work

Since 2019, AMWU organisers have been working on a just transition for Collie in WA's South West. Delegates from Muja Power Station, Collie Power Station, Premier Coal, Griffin Coal and South32 have led the work - not the state office in Perth or national head office in Sydney.

When the WA Government announced three years ago that Muja would be retired in stages, many workers in Collie felt anxious and unsure about their futures. Now, though, the funding and commitments delegates have secured from the state government and industry has workers in Collie feeling much more optimistic.

Phil Massara has worked as a Special Class Welder at Muja Power Station for 16 years. He knows that getting new industry into town is critical.

"We need something to replace what's going to shut down, and we'll likely need more than seven years to get that up," he says. "Collie is a place where generations worked in the mines. My grandad worked in the mines, and my parents did too. We work with our hands, so we want a similar industry. It's not just forklift tickets - it's about bettering our education."

The Collie Just Transition Working Group formed in mid-2019 and has met every six weeks ever since. It brought unions, local councils, businesses and the state government together. While there was plenty of debate and disagreement among the different groups represented, the working group agreed on some fundamental principles: celebrating Collie's history and future, maximising opportunities for affected workers, diversifying the economy, and ensuring commitment from all parties.

"The just transition wouldn't be anywhere without the union," Phil says. "Permanent contractors had to fight to be included in the transition planning. Even after the contract managers signed on, the bosses had just sort of been going along with it. But now everyone is coming up with ideas for their futures and what they want to do."

No just transition without a jobs transition

Most importantly, delegates made sure the working group agreed that the work of ensuring a just transition for Collie wouldn't stop after a few years. It will take 10 to 15 years of work to do this right - and that's what the Working Group is now committed to.

Every single time the working group meets, the AMWU holds a joint delegates' meeting after work to go through what was discussed and next steps. AMWU members inform this process constantly - they're not only pushing for outcomes, but they are also experts in energy and industry. The delegates and activists are informed and active, and share that with the entire workforce.

Phil is part of the delegates' and activists' group that meets after every working group session.



Above: Special Class Welder and working group delegate Phil Massara. Opposite page: One of the Collie Mural Trail artworks commissioned by the WA Government and the Shire of Collie. Credit: Taj Kempe

"Muja has always been a good place to talk about the transition," he says. "We thought we were going to be first, because this is the oldest power station - we thought between 2030 and 2034 was our expected closing date. Since the closure announcements, the idea of a just transition has meant a lot more. It's taken a lot more seriously by everyone onsite."

Since the working group began in 2019, AMWU delegates have achieved some enormous wins for Collie workers. They won full transition support for workers and contractors at Synergy and Collie Station, a \$3.8 billion renewable energy infrastructure plan, a \$26 million training package for all affected workers, a state government commitment to bring the Magnium green magnesium refinery to Collie, and a \$13 million fund to make Collie a centre for cathode manufacturing.

If it weren't for this ongoing work, the WA Government's plan to retire publicly owned coal power stations by 2030 could have been a catastrophe for workers in Collie. But AMWU delegates are ensuring that workers are at the centre of every government and business decision that affects Collie, and that members have what they need to have confidence in their futures. Our members deserve the world, and in Collie there is a chance they can get it. ●

Life after a workplace accident: a member's story

In 2019, diesel mechanic Mark Green was servicing a Brisbane City Council bus when an airbag went off in his face. Mark suffered massive head injuries, including severe brain damage.

The following is an edited version of a speech given by Tracey Cooling - Mark's partner - to the Queensland & Northern Territory 2022 Safety First Delegates Conference in June.

We were your average, typical family.

We had two incomes and enjoyed our family time together. We had lots of plans for the future and for our kids. Mark wanted to complete some further studies - he's very passionate about workplace health and safety and was looking at getting off the tools.

But those plans are all gone now, because on 13 March 2019, Mark was injured at work and sustained a catastrophic brain injury.

When I got to the hospital emergency window and I said Mark's name, I was immediately transported to a room, and I knew then that it was going to be quite serious.

A surgeon came in and said to me that Mark had received a blow to his head, had received brain damage, and that part of his brain was dead and they needed to do surgery to save the rest of it.

They told me I needed to prepare myself because they didn't think Mark would get off the operating table.

Ten hours later, he did get off the operating table. He remained in ICU for six weeks and spent another four-and-a-half on the ward. He was then moved to a brain rehabilitation centre, in a semi-conscious state.

I travelled to the brain injury unit every day. Four days before Mark was coming home, he was declared to be emerging from his semi-coma.

It was as if a light had been turned on. Mark's face just came back to life. It was amazing.

It was 512 days before Mark finally came home from work.



Mark Green with his two sons at the Great Wall of China in 2018.

With a team of allied health professionals, doctors, and care staff - myself - Mark has regained full consciousness of the world around him. He's talking, he's eating food, and he's enjoying most of the things he did before. He's got movement in his body now, and he's trying to learn to stand with the hope that one day he'll take some steps.

The AMWU and its members jumped in on day one, offering emotional and financial support. Other unions also gave very generously to us. Mark's union colleagues paid for all my fuel, parking and toll bridge fees so that I could visit Mark every day. A person in a coma is more likely to wake up when they hear a familiar voice.

The impact of Mark's work-related injury has been devastating. Our life will never be the same. Any aspirations Mark and I had are gone forever. Mark will never return to being the person he was. That person is gone and we have to accept that.

Financially, we are struggling. I've been unable to return to work for many reasons, mainly due to his care support. Every day, I'm a carer, a physio, a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, and a mum and partner. Each of our kids have been affected in different ways.

I am not entitled to Centrelink payments. Mark's WorkCover income has reduced by 25 per cent.

Our friends have slowly stopped showing up and checking in. And I do understand this, because for everybody else, life goes on. It was only our life that stopped that day.

Mark has limited mobility. He's now in a wheelchair. His limbs have no functional ability. We cannot travel in a normal car, and we live in a modified house. Mark has two 24-hour support carers, which is six people through our house. On most days, we've never met these people before. Our kids can't have friends over to visit because our home situation is too overwhelming for little kids.

But this is our life now, and I have to have a positive outlook. Mark is better than he was three years ago. Even one year ago. We have to be happy if this is where his capacity stays, and we are.

I have to have faith in Mark. He has proven to us that he has a solid inner strength and will not be beaten. He will continue to grow in capacity to get his life back. Please look after yourselves, and stay safe.

You can donate to Mark and Tracey at the following AMWU fundraising account:
BSB: 082-057
A/C: 18-898-9948
Name: AMWU Disaster Appeal Account
Description - GREENCOOLING and your name ●

"A gentleman and a scholar"

Member Bill Kennedy celebrated his 100th birthday in July. We visited him to celebrate a life of action and solidarity.

If you're lucky enough to make it to your 100th birthday, you get a letter from the Queen and the Governor-General. If you're a member of the AMWU, you get something extra: an AMWU beanie, hand-delivered by the National Secretary.

Bill Kennedy reached that milestone in July. A resident of a retirement community in Pendle Hill, Bill received a visit from National Secretary Steve Murphy on his birthday to thank him for a lifetime of commitment to the union and his comrades.

Bill was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1922. He and his family lived a hard life in his childhood - as a baby, he was not expected to live past five years old. Starvation was a real threat for Bill, his mother and sisters. After his father walked out on the family, Bill was placed in the care of a boys' home at the age of seven or eight. It was here, for the first time, that he tasted butter.

After three years, Bill's parents got back together, and two more girls joined Bill and his two sisters. As they grew older, all of Bill's sisters migrated to America, where they went into domestic service. He is still in contact with one of them, regularly speaking by phone.

Bill did his apprenticeship at the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, close to where he grew up in the Glasgow district of Govan. While there, Bill worked on the HMS Oxfordshire, a troopship that would later be converted into the TSS *Fairstar*, a migrant carrier transporting "ten-pound Poms" to Australia.

The *Fairstar* would sail until 1997, spending the last 23 years of her life as a pleasure cruiser. Bill still has a picture of the *Fairstar* on his wall.

On completing his apprenticeship, Bill worked in the Middle East for two years on an oil pipeline stretching 800 miles from Iraq to Syria and Palestine.

In 1949, Bill came to Australia. He found work as a boilermaker and welder, mostly building oil tanks. Among many other places, he worked at the Cockatoo Island Dockyard in Sydney, Clyde Engineering in Granville, and AE Goodwin in Sydney's west.

Working for Chicago Bridge, Bill moved around the country, working in Tasmania and Mandurah in southwest WA, where he built an oil tank alongside a seawall.

Bill was a unionist from the beginning and served as a delegate across different jobs. It was in his capacity as a delegate that Bill went to Canberra to lobby the Menzies government on many occasions.

"Menzies was a bad man when it came to unions," Bill says. "How he was in so long got me beat." (Bill is much more complimentary of Gough Whitlam, whom he calls "a gentleman".)

Bill attended May Day marches down George Street for 50 years and became active in the retired members' branch upon retirement.

"Those were the days!" Bill says. "They were hectic days. There were a lot of strikes, but they were necessary. Things had to be fought for. If it wasn't for my knees, I would be down there now."

While visiting, Steve helped Bill send his "old pal" and fellow Glaswegian Doug Cameron a video message. Doug immediately called him back, and they talked about Glasgow, the union, and working life. Bill told Doug he was a gentleman and a scholar, to which Doug replied: "As are you."



From top: Bill with his beanie. Happy birthday Bill! Above: The TSS *Fairstar*. Credit: Stephen Dwyer.

Bill was married to his wife, June, for 61 years. Their passion was travel - they visited the United States, Scotland and the Pacific Islands, and drove all over Australia. Bill only gave up driving in his 90s, though not entirely - he has traded in his car for a mobility scooter.

As for the beanie, it was a perfect fit. "I always get a baldie haircut, so the beanie will come in handy," Bill says.

From all of us at the union, Bill: thank you, and happy birthday. ●

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DELEGATE PROFILE

Julie Griffiths

Julie has worked in pharmacies for 18 years.

After starting as a cashier and dispensary technician in a retail pharmacy, Julie has now worked as a trainer and session controller in pharmaceutical manufacturing for over 10 years. She began getting involved in workplace organising about 18 months ago after noticing co-workers were being poorly treated by management.

"Our workplace is quite new to the union - I joined in 2018 and was the only member for a few years," Julie says.

"I was working to make improvements on various issues, and in February last year butted heads with management. At the same time, they wanted to promote me without any increase in pay. I was feeling pretty despondent and thought about leaving, but that would've left my co-workers with all the problems instead. I channeled that feeling into talking about union power at work and trying to change our conditions."

Since becoming a union delegate in February, Julie has worked to educate her co-workers about how the union can help support them, and encourage them to join.

"I started making weekly posters to build awareness about our rights, and



Julie Griffiths is an AMWU delegate at a medical manufacturer in Western Sydney.

made a private social media group for people to ask for help," Julie says. "Communication between staff on different shifts is hard, which is why I started using posters."

Julie's the first union representative in her workplace, which makes her work both more important and more difficult. Even in the face of resistance from management, she has managed to create an environment where workers feel more able to raise concerns and demand better treatment. ●



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