

ACTU Indigenous Committee Report

to

ACTU Congress 2006

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[**Cover photograph:** Members of the ACTU Indigenous Committee who attended the Darwin August 2006 meeting, together with Valda Graham LHMU participant and Sharna Rae AEU NT member and Aboriginal Education Worker.]

1. ACTU Indigenous Committee – Who we are, what we do

The committee members and observers are currently (in alphabetical order, by surname):

Maureen Ah Sam (NTEU); Haydyn Bromley (Unions SA); Diat Callope (IEU); Mal Cochrane (PSA NSW); Wayne Costelloe (AEU); Charline Emzin-Boyd (AEU NSW); Joanne Kerr (CPSU); Adam Kerlake (Unions NSW); Ros Lockhart (CATSIN/ANF); Clem O'Shannessey (HSUA); Darcel Russell (AEU); Kevin Tory (TUCAR/ASU) and Ken Willie (QCU).

The Committee, on behalf of the ACTU Executive, implements ACTU Indigenous Policy between Congresses.

The committee strongly welcomes participation from as many Indigenous members as possible, and encourages all affiliates who do not have representation on the committee to consider sending a delegate to the meetings. Unions who already have delegates to the committee are also encouraged to send additional members who will be welcomed as observers.

2. About this booklet

This booklet has been created by the ACTU Indigenous Committee to assist affiliates in areas such as:

- Recruiting and organising Indigenous members;
- Campaigning on Indigenous issues;
- Supporting the on-going struggle for Indigenous rights in Australia; and
- Acknowledging and paying respects to the customs of Indigenous peoples as the First Nations peoples of Australia.

It also provides an overview of the work of the ACTU Indigenous Committee from Congress 2003 to Congress 2006. It is hoped that affiliates will use this booklet as a tool for informing their Indigenous and non-Indigenous members about the work of the Committee and encouraging members to be involved.

3. Welcome to Country

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' relationship to their traditional lands and waters are unique. This relationship, often referred to in the familial (i.e. the land is my mother), entails a range of responsibilities including the custodianship of the spiritual and environmental safety of country. These responsibilities are defined through traditional law and include acknowledging and paying respects to the spirit ancestors who created the land and the ancestors and elders who have gone before, and have returned to the land as custodians.

Welcoming people to country is an embodiment of this relationship to land, and as such is a practice of special significance. When an Aboriginal person visits places in their country, they may talk to the spirit ancestors of that place to identify who they are and who is accompanying them. In some areas welcoming visitors may take other forms – it could be a formal or informal welcome address or another type of ceremony. Such ceremonies typically involve the use of fire, smoke or water. Local groups each have their own customs and protocols about welcoming visitors to their land.¹

Welcome to Country is also a representation of sovereignty and a ceremonial characterisation of the fact that Indigenous peoples of Australia have never ceded their rights to or responsibilities over their country.

Acknowledgement of Country takes place when Traditional Owners may not be available to welcome people to country, for example, at smaller meetings and events. The purpose of this acknowledgement is to pay respects to the Traditional Owners and ancestors of the land.

ACTU Indigenous Committee meetings commence with an Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the meeting is taking place. The Committee encourages Unions to adopt this practice at meetings.

4. Identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members

Some ACTU Affiliates already provide a question on membership application forms which allows voluntary self-identification for Indigenous Australians. Such self-identification allows those unions to create a database of Indigenous members which can facilitate recruitment, organising and networking of Indigenous members.

¹ From <http://www.aboriginaltourism.com.au/pdf/WTC%20Brochure.pdf#search=%22aboriginal%20welcome%20to%20country%22>

The ACTU Indigenous Committee encourages all Unions to insert the following question in their Membership Application Forms:

<p>Self Identification Question</p> <p>Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as such and is accepted as such by the community in which he/she lives. For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both 'Yes' boxes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander</p>

The inclusion of an Indigenous Self Identification question on affiliate membership forms enables affiliates to establish an Indigenous member's register for new Indigenous members.

Affiliates are also encouraged to undertake an audit of existing members who identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander peoples. This can be achieved by Affiliates making a formal announcement to all its members that an Indigenous Members register is being established and to request existing Indigenous members who wish to identify to inform their Union as such. A regular small to medium sized promotion within Affiliate publications of the existence of the Indigenous members register is a useful way to promote this message to members.

5. Checklist of a Union's activities on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues

The checklist on the next page was developed by Indigenous delegates at the 2004 Indigenous Unionists Conference and is designed to assist affiliates in the process of evaluating their activities in recruiting and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and members.

Unions are encouraged to print this checklist and use as a first step in the process of developing a plan to recruit, organise and activate Indigenous members.

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and issues			
• Is your Union's leadership aware of the issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and their communities?			
• Are your Union's employees aware of the issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and their communities?			
• Are your Union's members aware of the issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and their communities?			
• Does your Union have strategies in place to identify existing Indigenous members?			
• Does your Union have strategies in place to identify potential Indigenous members?			
• Are Indigenous issues included in your Union's training programs?			
• Does your Union hold meetings for Indigenous members?			
• Does your Union employ Indigenous people?			
• Does your Union have a policy or plan of action in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members or issues?			
• Does your Union implement action in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues?			
• Do you have Indigenous issues on your Union's meeting agendas?			
• Does your Union engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in the policy development and planning process?			
• Are your policies and plans in relation to Indigenous members producing results?			
2. Resources			
• Does your union allocate resources to Indigenous members and/or issues?			
• Are resources allocated to Indigenous members, projects or issues on an ongoing basis?			
3. Decision-making processes			
• Does your Union have Indigenous representation on its decision-making bodies?			
• Does your Union have an Indigenous network and activists structure?			
• Does this structure link to democratic processes within the Union?			
4. Developing a sectoral strategy			
• Has your Union mapped the current situation in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues in your areas of coverage?			
• Has your Union identified goals and/or targets?			
• Has your Union designed campaigns to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers?			
• Will this campaign produce outcomes?			
• Can your Union establish Indigenous employment targets within a particular industry?			
• Are there any other elements that can be addressed in bargaining for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers?			

6. ACTU Structures and Support

6.1 Indigenous Executive and Proxy Positions

ACTU rules allow for an elected Indigenous representative and proxy on the ACTU Executive. These positions are elected at ACTU Congress for a term of 3 years, spanning to the next Congress. Indigenous delegates at Congress form the Electoral College (people who are able to vote) for the Executive and Proxy positions. The ACTU Indigenous committee is proposing a rule change to the 2006 Congress which recommends the expansion of the Electoral College, in the event of a casual vacancy arising against either position, to members of the ACTU Indigenous committee and Indigenous Congress delegates, with the provision that each person is entitled to only one vote.

A decision was taken by the committee to consider the person elected to the Executive position as the Chairperson of the committee, and to elect a person other than the proxy position to the position of Deputy Chair.

6.2 ACTU Officer Support

The work of the committee is currently supported by ACTU President, Sharan Burrow and ACTU Research Officer, Marion Gaynor. This enables the committee to seek advice from the leadership of the ACTU, and work closely with an ACTU Officer who liaises with affiliates on behalf of the committee and, along with the Indigenous Executive member, is responsible for progressing the work of the committee between Congresses and ACTU Executive meetings.

6.3 ACTU Indigenous Unionists' Conference and Unionists' Caucus

The ACTU convenes an Indigenous Unionists' Conference and an Indigenous Unionists caucus at ACTU Congress. The conference is generally held biennially, except in Congress years, where a caucus for Indigenous members is held instead.

The ACTU Indigenous committee is responsible for planning the conference and caucus, which provide Indigenous unionists an opportunity to meet, discuss issues and input in to the decision-making process through relevant forums.

6.4 ACTU Indigenous policy

The ACTU Indigenous policy can be found at http://www.actu.asn.au/congress2003/finalpolicies/aboriginal_final.html

6.5 ACTU Indigenous Unionist Award

The Committee has been successful in having the 'Indigenous Unionist' category added to the ACTU Awards. Unfortunately, there were no nominations for this category in 2005. The 2004 award was won by Les Tobler from the CFMEU for his outstanding work in the development of an employment and training program for Indigenous youth in inner city Sydney.

7. Campaigns

7.1 Your Rights at Work (YRAW)

The YRAW campaign has been the focus of the broader work of the ACTU since 2005. The campaign has been developed with a strong community focus, and has been successful in raising community awareness about John Howard's draconian Industrial Relations Laws.

In Queensland, the former QCU Indigenous Employment Officer, Wayne Costelloe (now with the AEU) conducted a series of community briefings and forums around South East Queensland – he spoke to community organisations, staff reference groups, student bodies etc. He also used the "Message Stick" email network to get information out to parts of Queensland he didn't travel to.

In relation to promoting Union membership and IR issues to Indigenous communities the QCU developed a strategy titled, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workers and Unions". It's a strategy designed to increase Indigenous participation and representation in Unions. A draft version is completed and about to go to focus groups for further development. The plan is to roll out training sessions for Unions and community members to attend.

In NSW, the Indigenous committee decided to target one particular electorate and is in the process of sending emails to peak bodies and community members in the area to find out the correct people to speak to. The goal by December 2006 is to get all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the target seat on the electoral role. They are also planning on getting information out via Indigenous radio, newsletter, etc.

At the early stages of the campaign, the ACTU Indigenous Committee produced a leaflet for use with Indigenous community members. There are plans to produce more materials.

7.2 CDEP Award

In spite of all good attempts, the CDEP Award process has been put on hold, due to the implementation of the Howard Government's IR changes. The following is an excerpt from the letter sent to affiliates by ACTU President Sharan Burrow:

For a number of years your union along with several others and the ACTU Indigenous Committee has worked towards achieving a federal award to cover award free employees of CDEP organisations. Despite a huge amount of preparatory work the project has been plagued with unfortunate setbacks, not the least being the abolition of ATSIC. The proposed Work Choices legislation expected to be proclaimed on or around 1st March 2006 is the latest in a long list of setbacks. It will not be possible to achieve a safety net award for CDEP employees before 1 March 2006 and the effect of the legislation will mean no new awards can be made after 1 March 2006.

The committee has discussed a 'roping in' strategy and alternate strategies at subsequent teleconferences. The discussion and decisions were minuted as follows:

With the operation of the Work Choices amendments to the Workplace Relations Act expected to be in operation by the end of March, and the consequent change in the role of awards and lapsing of part heard award applications on day one of its operation, the decision was made late last year not to proceed with logging CDEP organisations. Unions were asked to consider roping-in organisations to existing awards.

Strategies for discussion:

- *Determine how many people are employed under CDEP and how many are employed under joint funding arrangements.*
- *Explore the strategy of signing up CDEP workers to the union covering the work they do for the (often) three days and then try to get 5 days funding of the work.*
- *Unions to sign up CDEP workplaces and enforce conditions of employment for the days they are working.*
- *In relation to those who are employed in the State public services, develop a proposal for States to negotiate with Commonwealth and ask for CDEP funding to go to the States and then the States pay 5 days wages and full employment entitlements*
- *Members should also raise the funding issue with State Members of Parliament, with feedback to the Committee.*
- *Consider writing to the Federal Minister emphasising the importance of CDEP because for some communities it is all they have.*
- *Proposal to have a one-day meeting with ANTaR representatives to discuss employment policy and organising State based workshops in 2007.*
- *Use as a basis for policy discussion with ALP.*

These strategies will be discussed in further detail by the committee in the shaping of an Indigenous Employment Rights Campaign.

7.3 Indigenous Employment Rights

In the light of the history of the CDEP Award strategy and the need for consistency across the board the Committee will undertake work to develop a Charter of Indigenous Employment Rights. Discussions will occur with interested individuals and organisations who may wish to work with the Committee. The Committee will try to engage as many groups across the community as possible.

A Framework for the Charter will encompass Headlines and Processes.

Headlines: Rights to:

- Access to employment – locally, regionally or wherever.
- Union access to workers and rights to organise, including education about rights and responsibilities.
- Access to training and development, support and mentoring, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge as well as Western knowledge.
- Recognition of Aboriginal Knowledge and what this means for participation of Indigenous workers in the workforce.
- Have Aboriginality clearly defined when an Indigenous position is identified.
- Recognition of the need for flexibility and balance regarding cultural practices and responsibilities.
- Equal Pay and Conditions, including to entitlements, packages, CDEP/Stolen Wages, Superannuation.
- Workplaces free from racism and discrimination, workplaces which are supportive.
- Recognition of cultural work caring for country and cultural business as work of equal value.

Process – How to use the Charter once developed:

- Can be used to provide a generic overview, with associated local agreements/deeds/Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)
- To lobby Governments and/or companies to review employment practices.
- To review existing support structures for Indigenous workers working in Indigenous organisations and mainstream employment to improve the outcomes for members of Indigenous communities.
- To improve visibility in the political process
- As a basis to engage Indigenous Organisations as employers in the consultations.
- As a basis to engage with Indigenous Communities and organisations, NGOs, Land Councils to promote union rights and encourage Indigenous participation in unions and politics.
- As a basis for reaching out at as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the ACTU Indigenous Committee as an expression of our values.

8. Anangu Justice in Our Land Campaign

The ACTU was approached to support the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Traditional Owners in their campaign to seek further time for consultation before the amendments to the Act were put to SA parliament. Elders of the lands feared that the changes may be used to further erode the rights of Traditional Owner groups, particularly in relation to uranium mining and development of other mining activity.

The following resolution was put to SA TLC as the peak Union body in SA:

RESOLUTION

SA Unions passed a resolution tonight in support of the Anangu. Beside this SA Unions also offered further assistance by way of:

- 1. Assisting with accommodation cost for TO's currently in Adelaide up to \$500.00*
- 2. Distributing petitions and information*
- 3. Developing a Press release stating their support for Anangu*
- 4. Writing a letter to the Premier*
- 5. Lobbying support from the Australian Council of Trade Unions*
- 6. Allowing use of premises for meeting space, photo copier, Media release facilities provided there is negotiation first.*

A letter was sent to all affiliates requesting financial support for this campaign.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) South Australia has since reported that a number of unions made donations to the campaign fund.

9. Stolen Wages

The ACTU and affiliates continue to support the Stolen Wages Campaign through the work of ANTaR. The TLC in Western Australia is providing assistance for the establishment of a campaign group in WA and the NTEU is a partner in facilitating research to establish the Stolen Wages Campaign at a state level in Victoria..

Unions also supported activities on the National Day of Action for Stolen Wages which took place around Australia on 10 December (held to coincide with International Human Rights Day).

The Stolen Wages report being written by Dr Ros Kidd will be released shortly, at which time it is expected that there will again be significant activity around the campaign.

Currently there is a class action is being proposed for NSW, and Aunty Marjorie Woodrow is involved in establishing a National Elders Council, will focus a significant amount of its work on Stolen Wages.

On Thursday, 30 March 2006, Senator Andrew Bartlett referred to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee the issue of Stolen Wages for inquiry and report by the last sitting day of 2006. The ACTU will provide a submission.

10. Model Employment Clause

Many unions have done work on developing Indigenous-specific clauses for enterprise agreements and awards. One of the most successful examples of a union implementing an industry-wide employment strategy through the development and implementation of a claim framework is the NTEU, which developed an Indigenous Employment Claim through extensive consultation with Indigenous members. This Claim is an example of employment clauses that can be pursued by Unions to increase Indigenous employment.

That the University develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy, in conjunction with the NTEU. The parties recognise that a supportive working environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders requires the redress of racism, social injustice, exploitation and employment inequity.

Consistent with principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self-Determination, social and restorative justice, and cultural affirmation, the parties are therefore committed to the development and implementation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy which seeks to:

- Maximise staff development along with the transfer of job skills and information in order to increase Indigenous knowledge, independence, remuneration, job security and self sufficiency;*
- Increase, encourage and foster Indigenous employment and participation at all levels of work activity;*
- Facilitate and encourage the direct involvement of Indigenous employees in determining their own career strategies, goals and objectives.*

These employment provisions were successfully negotiated at every Australian University nationally and have been adopted by the Federal Government as a condition of eligibility for receiving funding under the current Indigenous higher education funding guidelines.

11. The work of some Indigenous Unionists

Diat Callope

Diat Callope is the Indigenous Adviser with the IEU NSW Branch. Diat is working with Indigenous teachers to ensure that their qualifications are recognised. Diat is also working with teaching institutes to ensure courses for trainee teachers include units on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

The IEU has members employed as Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs). An example of the work of AEWs is provided by an educational initiative, named *Wii Gaay*², which provides a range of programs for Indigenous students in Years 3 to 5 targeting language, numeracy, literacy, building resilience, attendance, retention and realising academic potential.

The programs ensure Indigenous students have access to an education which gives appropriate consideration to Aboriginal communities, individuals and learning styles. The program also focuses on the broader school population, fostering a strong appreciation and understanding of Aboriginal culture and history. All programs are made possible by the 24 Aboriginal education workers (AEWs) employed in the schools, by the involvement and support of parents and communities, and by the Aboriginal Education Consultant working to support the AEWs and to ensure they are adequately resourced. Employment of Aboriginal people is seen as being vital to the program's success.³

Darcel Russell

Darcel Russell is the Deputy Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the AEU is incorporated within the AEU Rules. The Rules facilitate the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in to the decision-making structures of the Union.

The Rules provide for one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative from each of the 8 Branches of the Union to be elected to the AEU Annual Federal Conference – the supreme decision making body of the Union. Additionally the Rules provide for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representative on the AEU's Federal Executive.

AEU Policy, which governs AEU representation at International Forums, provides for Indigenous engagement and participation.

² This program is an initiative of the Armidale Catholic Schools Office.

³ Source: IEU Journal Newsmoth Vol 26 # 6 2006

Indigenous representation at such forums provides a great experience to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rank and file members of the Union and also enables the AEU to draw on the first hand experience of Australia's First Nations representatives in international affairs. Under this Policy, the AEU has sent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members as a part of the AEU's International delegations to a range of forums, including the Education International World Congress, held every three years in different parts of the world.

Mal Cochrane

Mal Cochrane is the Indigenous Officer for the CPSU SPSF NSW Branch. Mal has been with the PSA since 2001.

The PSA has recently included the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self Identification question in its Membership Application Form. New Indigenous members are ticking the box. Mal says it will take time to identify those who were members before the question was inserted in the Membership Form. Mal says it's important for Indigenous members to have a self-identification option because Indigenous people need to have a say in their Union.

The PSA has a recognised structure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workplace delegates. These delegates know their agency the best and recruit other Indigenous colleagues to the Union. The delegates are elected by the Indigenous members. Mal and the Union have found that these are increasingly being utilised by non-Indigenous members as well.

Mal says the PSA Indigenous membership is building strongly. They utilise the Indigenous networks within the government agencies. Because of the large geographical area covered by NSW it's hard for Mal to visit all areas with regularity but his role is assisted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates in government agencies. Indigenous people are particularly comfortable talking with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates.

The Union has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegate's network and takes the delegates to meetings with their agency Director-Generals and CEOs to lobby for policy such as Indigenous Employment targets.

Mal and the PSA have assisted in the development of the "Two Ways" document which requires NSW Department Director-Generals and CEOs to be accountable for their agency's performance in relation to Indigenous matters.

Mal is trying to establish an Indigenous Advisory Committee for SPSF to facilitate consistency for the SPSF Group across Australia.

Kevin Tory

Kevin Tory is an Indigenous trade unionist working for the Trade Unions Committee on Aboriginal Rights (TUCAR). Kevin has held this position for nineteen years. Kevin was also the Director of the Co-operatives for Aborigines at Tranby College for 15 years.

Kevin has been a member of the ACTU Indigenous Committee for 15 years assisting in the development of their policy. Kevin is the Australian Services Union representative on the Committee.

Kevin notes that when he was first involved with the ACTU there were no Indigenous people working for Unions, now there are quite a few which he says is very pleasing indeed. Kevin says this helps keep his People's issues on the political agenda, Trade Unions being very supportive of Reconciliation and Social Justice issues affecting Indigenous People.

Adam Kerslake

Adam is the Director of Organising at Unions NSW, having joined Labor Council at the beginning of 2002. Adam is responsible for coordinating Unions NSW's organising activities, and assisting individual unions with their regeneration.

Adam has also worked with the Electrical Trades Union (NSW Branch) where he was employed for 12 months to coordinate their organising activities, the ACTU Organising Centre and, in the late 1980s, as an official with the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

Adam is also coordinating the Your Rights at Work Targeted Seats campaign for Greenway.

Adam Kerslake is the Convenor of the Unions NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee.



Charline Emzin-Boyd

Charline Emzin Boyd is the AEU NSW Branch (NSW Teachers Federation) Aboriginal Education Coordinator. Charline was elected to this position in 2003, and again in 2006. The position has State-wide responsibilities in relation to organising and providing support for the membership of the Branch's Aboriginal members and the Aboriginal Members Committee, Aboriginal Education Restricted Committee, Aboriginal Councillors, Aboriginal Executive members, and Aboriginal Members Conference.

Charline has prioritised the development and engagement of Aboriginal members of the union since being elected to her position. This has led to an overwhelming increase in the number of Aboriginal members both joining the union and participating in the activities of the union.

Charline is a member of the AEU National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee, an elected member of the AEU Federal Executive Committee, and a member of the Unions NSW Indigenous Committee. Charline is a representative on various committees within NSW Education.

Wayne Costelloe

Wayne is the Federal Aboriginal Education Officer with the AEU. One of Wayne's primary responsibilities is to work with the AEU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee (ATSIEC) and TAFE ATSIEC. The AEU conducts an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar along side of the Annual Federal Conference, with the purpose of this forum to outline policy direction for the endorsement of Conference.

The AEU has initiated a campaign to get State and Territory Governments to make mandatory Indigenous studies as part of teacher training. This campaign is feeding down to State and Territory teacher registration bodies (or teaching institutes) who are responding by building such content into course registration.

Wayne is also establishing a campaign to obtain housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local recruits to teaching who if they choose to return to their communities to teach, currently do not qualify for access to teacher accommodation.

Wayne says his role is assisted because he receives good support from the elected Union Officers who value his opinion.

Ken Willie

Ken Willie has recently been appointed to the role of Indigenous Employment Officer for the QCU. Ken is continuing the work, commenced by Wayne Costelloe, of helping to establish networks of Indigenous workers within QCU affiliates. Ken is also working with Indigenous Employment Support Officers to, with the assistance of relevant unions, offer industrial advice to these workers and to recruit them so that the Unions can continue to assist them to deal with their workplace issues.

Valda Graham

Valda Graham was recently re-elected to one of the two Assistant Secretary roles of the Queensland Branch of the Liquor Hospitality & Miscellaneous Union (LHMU). Valda was first elected into this role in March 2005 upon the role being vacated by the now current Secretary of the Northern Territory Branch. Valda is from Quandamooka which is representative of the Islands and waters of Moreton Bay with cultural and traditional ties to Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island) through her Mother's side.

Valda's work within the LHMU includes responsibility for the Education; Aged Care/Health Industry Teams, assisting Vision Impaired Worker members who are employed by Royal Blind Foundation following the amalgamation between LHMU and Blind Workers Union in 2003, and Organisations employing predominantly Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples such as Aboriginal Hostels Ltd.

In 2005, in anticipation of the introduction of the Federal IR Laws, LHMU sought to assist local NGO Aboriginal Community members establish a Certified Agreement securing award conditions and wage increases for their workplace prior to the introduction of the laws. LHMU hopes to use this as a template for other Indigenous Organisations, however the current industrial environment will restrict and prevent certain provisions being contained within any future agreement that fall within the present Federal jurisdiction.

In July 2006, the LHMU and QTU were invited to participate in a consultative process with Education Queensland in regards to a review into Indigenous education support structures, to strengthen support for Indigenous Students. The Unions have participated in consultative forums throughout the State and will hold further discussions once key issues have been identified.

In August 2006 the LHMU Cairns based Regional Organiser Jeanette Temperley, undertook a mammoth trip throughout Cape York organising visits from Mareeba, Archer River, Laura, Coen, Bamaga, Injinoo, Weipa,

Mapoon to Aurukun to speak with workers in Ambulance, Health, Child Care, Teacher Aides and School Cleaner Industries. The trip was a success resulting in increased membership and an active interest by members in their Union.

The last ACTU sponsored National Indigenous Unionists Conference, in Sydney 2004, highlighted discussion on Indigenous Employment Strategies. Since then, the LHMU in Qld have made some progress (although recognising there is still a long way to go) by including such clauses in a number of agreements as follows: Bluecare; Centacare; Anglican & St Lukes Aged Care Agreements and Education Queensland - School Cleaner; Teacher Aide Agreements.

A further challenge for 2006 is assisting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander members employed by Aboriginal Hostels Ltd establish a national campaign against the proposed introduction of AWA's by their employer.

Joel Wright, Gregg Fryer

The NTEU has appointed a National Indigenous Officer (Joel Wright) and an Indigenous Projects Officer (Gregg Fryer) to support of the work of the Indigenous Tertiary Education Policy Committee (ITEPC) and implementation of NTEU Indigenous policies. These policies have been developed by many Indigenous education activists who include, Dr. Bob Morgan, Associate Professor Tracy Bunda, Professor Japanangka Errol West (dec), Maureen Ah Sam, and Terry Mason.

Shannon Grant

An LHMU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Conference held this year in Darwin identified various industrial issues for health workers. Shannon has been seconded by the LHMU to undertake a three month project organising health workers in order to assist them identify and deal with workplace issues. This in turn will benefit the workers and reduce staff turnover.

Sharna Rae

Sharna works as an Aboriginal Education Worker in the Northern Territory and is an activist with the AEU NT Branch assisting Aboriginal Education Workers employed in public schools in the NT.

Sharna set up a network of parents of Indigenous students to lobby against changes to Federal Government Funding arrangements for Indigenous education. The network has been active in lobbying the Federal Minister for Education and federal and local members of parliament.

12. The work of some ACTU Affiliates

Unions Tasmania

Unions Tasmania has a designated position for an Indigenous Councillor on the Unions Tasmania Council. That position is currently filled by Linda Woods.

ANF

The ANF has facilitated the formation of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses (CATSIN) and continues to work closely and inclusively with CATSIN and to provide support to CATSIN.

AEU

The AEU has a formal committee structure at the national level and in the Queensland Branch (QTU), the NSW Branch (NSWTF), the SA Branch and the WA Branch (SSTUWA). Meetings are held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in all other Branches, though not through formal committee structures. The AEU has rules which have established formal, elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Federal Executive and at the Federal Conference. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives are also formally elected in to identified Indigenous positions in the NSW, SA, NT, WA and Qld branches. These positions are either on Branch Executives, Branch Councils, Branch Conferences, or a combination of these.

The AEU runs a range of campaigns in relation to Indigenous issues and formally identifies Indigenous members through membership systems. There are currently 1100 Indigenous members of the AEU, double the number of members than there were four years ago.

NSW and the Federal Office employ Indigenous officers in designated positions. SA and NSW employ Indigenous people in mainstream organiser positions and one Indigenous person holds an elected officer position in the Federal Office.

The Qld Branch recently set up an email list of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers seeking information on Indigenous education and related Union issues, for example the IR Campaign.

Most AEU Branches maintain links with other organisations, for example Councils of Elders. They may also sponsor cross-cultural and anti-racism seminars for teachers, and participate in activities such as NAIDOC week and National Sorry Day.

ASU

The ASU is encouraging the formation of an ASU Indigenous network – 'AIM' - ASU Indigenous Members, across the Union. AIM will facilitate a members caucus and provide advice to the Union on advocacy of Indigenous issues, particularly in the light of the Howard Government abolishing of ATSIC, changing the CDEP scheme by mainstreaming Indigenous Services, introducing the Work Choices Legislation preventing new awards being made, and introducing change in the Welfare to Work program, all of which will impact upon Indigenous people.

The ASU has Indigenous members working in the Social & Community Services Industry, Local Government and Aboriginal Community Councils and Organisations. The ASU is currently working on strategies to gain common workplace agreements in Western Australia for Indigenous organisations with similar affinities in the same districts or regions. The ASU (AIM) National Coordinator is Barry O'Brien.

CPSU – VIC

The CPSU Victorian Branch has been involved in advising the Victorian Government on the development and implementation of *Wur-cum burra*, the Victorian Public Sector Indigenous Employment Strategy. Through this participation, Indigenous members and non-members saw the need to clearly voice matters of concern and to take action to assist relevant communities in recognising issues important to, and experienced by, Indigenous members within the public service. Subsequently, CPSU Indigenous membership grew and with this a desire for comprehensive representation in the workplace, where a connection between workplace rights and Indigenous issues could be made.

The CPSU Vic Indigenous members organised a Indigenous Network meeting and then arranged *The Gathering* of CPSU/SPSF Victorian Branch Indigenous members in September 2005.

That meeting endorsed a draft CPSU Indigenous Branch Section (IBS) Constitution and formed a interim committee and passed a resolution recommending that the Branch Council endorse the Constitution and Interim Committee.

Since formation of the IBS, members have been actively involved in a number of projects, including designing a CPSU-indigenous banner and t-shirts, used to identify and promote indigenous workers in the union movement. A CPSU indigenous members' brochure was also developed and designed by the IBS and is currently in the process of being updated.

The IBS has been actively involved in protest days against the new industrial relations laws and has contributed to the ACTU "Your Rights at Work" campaign through individual donations and workplace discussions and plans to further contribute through profit made from indigenous/CPSU badges, which are in the process of being designed.

The IBS also hopes to further expose public servants to the branch section, promote union benefits and increase membership through the production of small flags and stickers and through developing a cultural awareness presentation for employees in the Victorian Public Service.



CPSU Indigenous Banner

CFMEU Aboriginal Employment Program

The CFMEU is committed to the training and employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the building and construction industry. For many years Les Tobler, an Indigenous Australian was employed as the CFMEU Aboriginal Liaison Officer. The Union received funding from their employment company the Building Workers Assistance Centre to assist with this initiative.

Les coordinated the recruitment of unemployed Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders to pre-employment training programs. The union then assisted in the placement of these successful students into employment. Many of the major builders in the industry were approached by Les who set up formal meetings to discuss their obligation to ensure an ongoing commitment to youth training and employment initiatives in the building & construction industry.

One of the major achievements was the development and establishment of accredited training programmes for Indigenous people through TAFE. The Job Ready Program was a collective industry wide effort, initiated in the second half of 2003.

The first program ran for 6 weeks where 16 students ranging in ages from 15 to 38 took part under the guidance and direction of their mentor Les Tobler. The employers responded positively to this initiative by providing

employment to all students. The program resulted in jobs for all 16. Two found employment in the first 2 weeks, and the rest went on to complete the course and have been employed in jobs ranging from apprenticeships, traineeships and laboring. A great success that led to real jobs.

Les Tobler went on to build on this success and scheduled several more courses in 2004 and 2005.



Les Tobler and Job Ready Graduates



Rohan Tobler

Rohan Tobler has recently taken up a full-time position as Liaison Officer position for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander workers with the CFMEU. The job is funded jointly by the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Redfern Waterloo Authority.

Rohan is working closely with another Indigenous officer Terry Kelly at the Authority on finding candidates for Indigenous Job Ready courses and mentoring them through to employment in the construction industry.

All contractors bidding for Redfern Redevelopment work have to provide an 'Aboriginal participation plan' as part of the tender process. It has resulted in 50 jobs already for Indigenous workers, with many more expected over the 10 year life of the redevelopment. Indigenous Job Ready courses will commence at purpose built premises in the Eveleigh train yards from late September. Meanwhile, another course is in progress at Lidcombe TAFE. TAFE teachers will continue to provide the training.

For Rohan Tobler working with his own people and seeing some good success stories coming out of it is the attraction of the new job. Besides working with the young trainees, Rohan and Terry are also assisting Indigenous construction companies to ensure they do the right thing by their employees.

Rohan Tobler is also the President of the [CFMEU](#) Reconciliation Committee. John Hartley is the CFMEU SA Branch Indigenous Liaison Officer.

NTEU

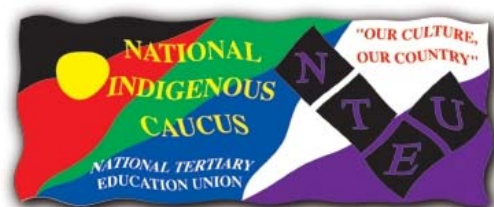
The NTEU Indigenous Tertiary Education Policy Committee (ITEPC) was established to, in conjunction with other committees of the Union, formulate policy and advise the Executive on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in employment and education in tertiary education institutions. The Committee is composed of three National Councillors (Indigenous) plus eight Indigenous members which includes an Executive convenor, elected from the National Indigenous Membership, for two year terms. [To view the ITEPC's Terms of Reference, visit <http://www.nteu.org.au/getinvolved/equal/indigenous/itepc/termsoref>]

The ITEPC is funded for three meetings per year, with funding provision for special projects. In addition to the Indigenous specific positions on ITEPC and at the Branch, Division and National Executive levels, Indigenous members also hold non-Indigenous specific positions such as Division Secretary, Division President and National Executive Member.

Each year the NTEU conducts an National Indigenous Members Forum to develop and put forward at NTEU National Executive, policy and industrial matters of concern to the Indigenous Caucus.



John Reid and other members of ITEPC at NTEU National Council.



One of the most significant NTEU recent initiatives was that of the Federal Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council. The IHEAC was allocated \$2.6 million dollars in its first two years to facilitate the conduct of an annual conference on Indigenous Higher Education issues and to decide and present awards for Indigenous higher education excellence.

The NTEU has also been active in supporting Indigenous social justice campaigns more broadly, such as Land Rights, Native Title and Stolen Wages.

As a result of the extensive Indigenous representation and appointment of Indigenous staff to specifically deal with Indigenous higher education issues, the NTEU Indigenous membership has increased to current levels of just under 50% of the sector.

Contact details for people and Unions mentioned in this booklet:

Diat Callope IEU NSW 02 9202 2600

Mal Cochrane CPSU -SPSF NSW 02 9290 1555

Wayne Costello AEU 03 9693 1800

Valda Graham LHMU 07 3291 4600

Barry O'Brien ASU 03 9342 1457

Darcel Russell AEU 03 9693 1800

Rohan Tobler CFMEU NSW 02 9749 0400

Kevin Tory TUCAR 02 9217 2100

Adam Kerslake Unions NSW 02 9264 1691

Charline Emzin-Boyd 02 9217 2100

Ken Willie QCU 07 3846 2468

AEU Queensland Branch 07 3512 9000

ANF 02 6232 6533

CPSU Victorian Branch 03 9639 1822

Unions Tasmania 03 6234 9553

Maureen AhSam, Terry Mason, Joel Wright, Gregg Fryer NTEU
03 9254 1910

Marion Gaynor ACTU 03 9663 5266