



ACTU CONGRESS 2006

Unions Australia

Research shows that 1.5 million Australians who are not currently members of a union would like to join.

Demand for union membership is strong. Last year, the ABS reported a 4% increase in union membership with an extra 70,000 workers joining a union.

The Australian community recognises the important role unions play in representing the rights of working Australian and their families. ACTU research in marginal seats revealed that 87.5% of Australians believe in the right to belong to a union.

The Your Rights at Work campaign has been an 'overwhelming success' (as declared recently in the News Limited press 24/9). Australians want union representation, unions have a responsibility to deliver this through membership growth.

Unions Australia is a membership growth initiative developed by the ACTU to provide a simple and easy way to join a union, on the spot, via telephone or internet.

Federal Government's IR laws have increased demand for Union Membership

Polls have revealed that of those people who are not currently union members 46% said, they were more likely to join a union because of the Federal Government's new laws.

Many people are calling the ACTU workers' hotline to join a union as a direct response to the Federal Government's IR laws:

- *"I'm concerned about what is happening with these laws, so I want to join a union. I've been in my job for many years and have been enjoying the (union) benefits. I think I should be a member, it's just that I've never been approached before."*
- *"I told my daughter, you should join a union! Especially now as there is no one else to fight the fight for you."*



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- *"I've got some questions about the new rules and regulations. I've been meaning to join the union for a long time and I thought while I'm thinking about these things it is a good time to join."*
 - *"I've never thought before to join a union myself. My husband is a unionist. I've encouraged my children to join. It's just for my job, as a carer, I never thought about it until now."*
 - *"I don't speak English that well. I want to join a union. I work in a big workplace. It is important."*
 - *"I want to join a union as I don't know how these laws are going to affect me. Firstly I want to know my rights; secondly I want to have backing."*
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About Unions Australia

Why should I join a union?

- Unions fight to protect the rights of working Australians and their families;
- Union workplaces deliver better pay and stronger conditions for workers;
- Collective bargaining has set standards for workers across the economy for over 100 years;
- If attempts are made to change your pay and conditions you need someone who can support you;
- Union members get access to special discounts and services that add value to your membership by saving you money; and
- Joining a union and being active in your union is a great way to ensure you and your family are better off.

“The best thing you can do to protect you and your family from the impact of these laws is to become a union member,” Greg Combet ACTU Secretary.

When I join through Unions Australia what do I get?

- Union membership of the specialised union for your sector;
- Membership Benefits, like access to Members' Equity Bank and cheap home loans, Managed funds, Union Shopper, discount new cars, discounted movie tickets, and more!;
- Information about the latest campaign - you'll receive the Your Rights at Work e-bulletins;
- The opportunity to make the most of your membership by receiving Member Services e-bulletins with information on all the latest membership benefits; and



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- You will play an important role in the fight to protect the Rights at Work of all Australians and their families.

What is Unions Australia?

Unions Australia is a national membership facility that makes it easy for Australians to join a union. You can now join a union through a single phone number, 1300 486 466, or via the internet www.actu.asn.au.

Union membership is the best way to protect the rights of working people and their families. Since the Federal Government's new IR laws many Australian workers and their families have been asking how they can join a union and get involved in the campaign. Unions Australia makes it easy for people to join a union.

Unions around Australia have supported the Unions Australia initiative to have a national phone number and website. When a person calls Unions Australia to join a union they are joining the specialised union who represents their industry.

Unions Australia makes joining a union easy and hassle free. To join call Unions Australia on 1300 486 466 - or visit the website and use the online joining form, www.actu.asn.au.

Research shows that as many as 1.5 million Australians, who are not currently union members, want to join. Unions Australia has been set up to give every working Australian who wants to join a union the opportunity to join.

Why has the ACTU set up Unions Australia?

When people want to join a union, they often don't know which one. They don't know who to call or where to look. Unions have curious acronyms, one union can represent a diverse range of industries and have numerous branches, which union to join is not always clear.

The ACTU and unions agreed the union movement needed a modern system to fit with the modern needs of today's workers. The one-stop-shop Unions Australia means that finding the union is easy. There is a national cost-of-a-local-call number, the easy to remember 1300 4 UNION (1300 486 466), and a join online website, www.actu.asn.au, that doesn't involve additional forms.



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How does it work?

A person calls the ACTU Call Centre or visits the website. They join the union on the spot. Membership details are collected, including ongoing membership payments via direct debit or credit card.

The person joins their union from day one. The administrative side may take some days, but as soon as union coverage is confirmed, the caller's membership details will be securely transferred to their union.

How do I know which union I'm joining?

A Welcome letter is sent to all new members in the first few weeks of membership. The new member will be informed of their union in this letter.

Unions Australia will facilitate the transfer of membership details to the members' union. The new member won't have to do a thing! The members' union will then contact the new member directly.

How much does it cost?

Unions Australia has a standard fee for the first 6 months of membership, after which the relevant dues of their union apply.

The standard fee is \$9 per week for a full-time worker and \$6 per week for a part-time or casual worker earning less than \$17,500pa. Fees are tax deductible.

How is Unions Australia funded?

Of those people who join through Unions Australia, the first 6 months of membership dues are held in Trust by the unions. This money will be used to resource the membership call centre, online joining, administrative costs and some marketing.



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What does the ACTU Workers' Hotline do?

The ACTU Workers' Hotline has been informing workers of their rights and helping them find a union for nearly a decade. Since the Federal Government's new IR laws have been proposed and implemented calls to the hotline have doubled, demonstrating the wide spread community concern for how these new laws are affecting workers and their families.

Trained organisers deal with callers' queries. Organiser training is regularly updated and reviewed to ensure it is current.

While organisers are skilled at assisting callers this service is no substitution for the expert representation of a member's union. Unlike union organisers the ACTU's call centre organisers cannot provide industry specific advice.

Only the relevant union can represent a person at their workplace. Membership of a union provides the best representation, advice and support for organising your workplace.

The ACTU Workers' Hotline is responsible for facilitating Unions Australia and can enable callers to join their union on the spot.

Can I join the ACTU?

No, the ACTU is not a registered union. The ACTU is the peak union body that represents the interests of working Australians and their families at a national level. It cannot represent individual workers on industrial issues.

I don't work, is there some way I can support the campaign?

Many Australians are concerned about the new IR laws. Opposing the Federal Government's IR laws is about making a decision about the type of Australia we want and the legacy we leave for our children.

If you are retired, self-employed,¹ a business owner or unemployed and would like to contribute to the campaign you can become a Your Rights at Work Supporter. To become a Supporter you will need to commit to make ongoing donations, via direct debit or credit card, of whatever amount you can afford.

¹ Owner operators and subcontractors may be eligible for full union membership - call 1300 4UNION to find out more information.



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As a Your Rights at Work Supporter you will be kept up-to-date with the campaign through the online campaigning emails. You will also have access to member services.

Supporters however, will not have access to industrial representation. If you need industrial advice, please ask the ACTU call centre about how you can join a union.

I need immediate representation - can I join now and get assistance?

Unions are membership-based organisations and are funded entirely by their members. Their top priority is to look after their members.

Unions take looking after members' money seriously and may be unable to help you with individual workplace issues that existed prior to membership. The amount of assistance available will depend on the circumstances of the grievance and the policy of the union.

For more information please call Unions Australia on 1300 486 466.

Can I join online? Is the site secure?

Yes, you can join online at www.actu.asn.au

We take looking after your personal details seriously. Unions Australia uses the highest level of security, the same level banks use for their online services. We don't store your information long term online and any information stored temporarily online is encrypted.

You'll know the site is secure if you enter directly by the URL: www.actu.asn.au. You'll also notice a padlock in the bottom right hand corner of your web browser.

If you are having any technical difficulties with our site, or have any questions, please call us on 1300 486 466.