

YOUNG PEOPLE AND UNIONS POLICY

ACTU CONGRESS 2000

1. Introduction

Unions and the ACTU recognise the need for young people to be actively involved in unions and to address their concerns in the workplace.

The key areas on which the ACTU will focus are:

- i. respect and dignity in the workplace;
- ii. job opportunities; and
- iii. increasing involvement of young people in unions.

2. Respect and Dignity

Discrimination and harassment of young people in the workplace is not acceptable. The ACTU will support the following actions to assist young workers;

2.1 Age Based Rates of Pay

The ACTU and unions will continue to campaign for the abolition of age-based rates of pay by:

- i. encouraging collective bargaining claims for wage structures based solely on skills and the ability to perform work;
- ii. support for affiliates making claims for the removal of age-based rates of pay from awards;
- iii. raising the discrimination issue in public debate in the community; and
- iv. lobbying for legislative change in co-operation with other groups representing students and young workers..

2.2 Harassment, Bullying and Workplace Safety

Young people are particularly vulnerable to harassment and bullying in the workplace. This can represent a serious hazard to their physical and mental health and safety.

The ACTU and unions will:

- i. include the issue of workplace bullying and harassment of young people in health and safety campaigns and publications;
- ii. include the issues of bullying and harassment in union education and training courses, highlighting particular concerns of young migrant and indigenous workers, young gay and lesbian workers, as well as sexual harassment of young women; and
- iii. promote a union Helpline/Internet service for young people to gain information about harassment, bullying and safety in the workplace.

3. Job Opportunities

With the virtual collapse of full-time job opportunities for young people, increasing numbers are forced into short-term casual employment which offers little in the way of career paths or financial security. The ACTU and unions will take action in the following areas;

3.1 Casualisation

Congress notes that the growth of casual employment relative to permanent employment with training and development opportunities presents a special problem for young workers. The ACTU and unions will seek to ensure greater employment rights for casual employees, by implementing the strategies identified in the Employment Standards policies.

3.2 Unemployment

The ACTU and unions will address the issue of youth unemployment by:

- i. encouraging affiliates to include claims for additional apprenticeships/traineeships in collective bargaining;

- ii. promote industry policy measures aimed at increasing investment in areas of high unemployment, to provide job opportunities for young people; and
- iii. Lobby government and campaign for public support to:
 - a) create greater job opportunities for young people, including in the public sector;
 - b) to maintain and improve social security benefits for young people;
 - c) provide appropriate services to assist young people find employment; and
 - d) conduct research on the impact of the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa program on the job opportunities for young Australians with a view to capping the number of these visas.

3.3 Education and Training

The ACTU and unions will:

- i. campaign with education unions, student groups and other community organisations to defend accessible, quality public education;
- ii. work with governments and employers to increase the number of apprenticeship and trainee places, including for Indigenous youth;
- iii. develop specific strategies to increase participation in apprenticeships by young people in the 15-19 age cohort; and
- iv. ensuring that the VET in schools program is better integrated with mainstream vocational training.

4. Involvement of Young People in Unions

4.1 Membership of Young People

The ACTU and its affiliates will:

- i. promote unions to young people through the media, the Internet, and directly in schools, TAFE colleges and universities;
- ii. develop a proposal for “Associate Membership” for students who are not presently in the workforce;
- iii. promote union membership amongst young casual workers; and

- iv. develop targeted campaigns directed at specific groups of young workers eg. trainees and apprentices.

4.2 Representation of young people in union structures

Unions will encourage the involvement of young people and their representation in union structures by:

- i. focussing the work of the Organising Centre towards recruiting and training young people to be delegates and/or activists in their workplaces;
- ii. utilising the Internet to enable young delegates/activists to better organise and communicate;
- iii. continue youth representation in ACTU structures;
- iv. running a National Young Delegates Forum; and
- v. the ACTU encouraging affiliates to nominate one representative to attend ACTU Youth Committee meetings.

5. Building Alliances

5.1 The ACTU and unions will look to form stronger relationships within the community, especially in relation to young people by:

- i. the Youth Committee forming stronger ties with other youth organisations, in particular student organisations;
- ii. building stronger relationships in schools, TAFE colleges, and Universities;
- iii. campaigning for the Federal Government to again fund the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC);
- iv. participating actively in debate on issues of relevance to young people, such as youth suicide, drugs, homelessness and mandatory sentencing; and
- v. endeavouring to have a public presence at relevant youth related events.