

Future of Work
Young People and Unions
Policy
ACTU CONGRESS 2003

Policy Framework

1. The key youth related issues for the ACTU, labour councils and affiliates to focus on over the next three years are broken into the following nine strategies:
 - (a) industrial;
 - (b) occupational health and safety;
 - (c) employment;
 - (d) traineeships and apprenticeships;
 - (e) connecting with students;
 - (f) accessing young workers;
 - (g) involving young members and officials in unions;
 - (h) campaigning; and
 - (i) services.

Industrial

2. Affiliates have achieved successes in the improvement of youth wages and will continue to pursue this by:
 - (a) bargaining for wages to be based on ability, skills and work value; and
 - (b) bargaining, and where appropriate seeking award changes, for the adult rate of pay to be reduced from 21 years and the most junior rate to be raised from 15 years.

3. In supporting the work of affiliates, the ACTU will prepare and present to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission a test case to establish as a standard that 20 year old workers receive adult rates of pay.
4. In recognition of the increasing number of students that are engaged in casual, part-time and full-time work, it is important for the workplace to accommodate study needs. This can be achieved by unions bargaining for study and examination leave for working students.
5. Young employees are more likely to be ignorant of their rights and vulnerable to exploitation because they are in employment for the first time. Unions can contribute to the protection of new 'first time' employees by:
 - (a) Making additional claims for 'New Employees' including compulsory supply in writing of employment contracts, such as enterprise agreements and wage rates.
 - (b) Holding inductions to ensure new starters know their rights.
 - (c) Bargaining for additional training in grievance procedures, and OHS standards.
 - (d) Ensuring new employees are approached by a union representative.
 - (e) Enforcing the right to payment during trial and training and probation periods.
 - (f) Ensuring representative workplace structures cater for and encourage participation by younger workers.
6. Some unions have successfully bargained the right for casual employees to convert to permanent part-time employment. In the interest of young workers who are predominantly casual, the ACTU encourages all affiliates to bargain and run cases to give employees the choice of converting to permanent full-time or part-time employment.
7. Young employees are often overlooked for additional skills training because they are the 'new staff' or considered 'transient' employees. Unions who are committed to improving conditions for young employees can bargain for automatic progression, through skills based classification structures.

Occupational Health and Safety

8. Bullying, harassment and violence towards young workers are becoming increasingly prevalent. They are based on power over the vulnerable,

which is exacerbated by increasing numbers of young workers being employed casually with little guarantee of work. Unions will:

- (a) Establish best practice for reducing bullying, harassment and violence towards young workers.
- (b) Train of delegates and officials to develop awareness and skills to resolve these issues.
- (c) Campaign around these issues as legitimate industrial claims.

Traineeships and Apprenticeships

9. The ACTU and Unions recognise quality VET programs as an important pathway for youth employment, and will continue participation in VET programs as reflected in the policy papers. Unions can support this program by actively pursuing:
 - (a) Collective bargaining for a commitment to permanency at completion of traineeships and apprenticeships.
 - (b) Making claims to increase wage rates and allowances for trainees and apprentices based on skills and competence, not junior rates of pay.
 - (c) Improved rights and enforcement of existing conditions for trainees and apprentices.
 - (d) Lobbying the Federal Government, ANTA and State and Territory Governments to ensure that every traineeship and apprenticeship has a "your rights at work" section as part of the training undertaken to ensure that young workers have better access to information about their rights at work.
 - (e) Developing resource material for trainees and apprentices around their rights in the workplace.
10. The wage rates for first and second year apprentices should be reviewed in light of the fact that, while wage rates assume that first year apprentices are 16, now an increasing number of first year apprentices have completed their HSC/VCE and are 18 years of age.

Employment

11. The ACTU, labour councils and affiliates recognise that youth unemployment is a fundamental issue affecting young people and society. Urgent initiatives are necessary including:
 - (a) creating access to quality education and training;

- (b) assisting the transition from school to employment; and
- (c) ensuring basic rights are maintained for VET in schools by enforcing students to have structured and paid work experience.

Connecting with Students

12. It is incorrect to assume students are only 'potential' workers. 55% of tertiary students and 32.5% of high school students are also workers. Unions should organise students through:
 - (a) work experience programs in high schools that can be accessed through career teacher networks;
 - (b) developing quality support material for teachers to use with students, such as a CD-Roms; and
 - (c) participating in career seminars in schools.

13. Several labour councils have negotiated with State Governments to ensure work issues are included in the high school curriculum. This is a practical way of educating about the positive role of unions in working lives, as well as a method of building the credibility and profile of the trade union movement with young people. Unions will:
 - (a) lobby State Governments to include work and unions in the school curriculum in subjects including history, business studies, civics and citizenship, geography and work-studies.
 - (b) seek to become engaged in the consultative process developing curriculum content and resources;
 - (c) develop lesson plans and provide other resources such as videos to assist teachers; and
 - (d) encourage teachers to promote the use of these resources in schools.

14. Labour councils and affiliates have been involved in visiting schools to speak to young student workers. There is no shortage of requests for unions to be involved in this activity. It therefore makes sense for labour councils to coordinate a program to:
 - (a) Develop a speakers list in each state to resource visitations.
 - (b) Consider appointing a coordinator in each state for the allocation of volunteers to speak at High Schools.

- (c) Collect resources currently used to determine a generic best model for all unions to use as a kit.
 - (d) Train speakers who might include delegates, retired unionists, and members who already have relationships with schools.
 - (e) Assess the results of programs currently being piloted by labour councils in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.
15. The ACTU supports unions having an active presence in university and TAFE Institutions. Unions are encouraged to continue to use the opportunity of reaching young non-members in relevant educational institutions. This can be achieved by:
- (a) conducting an audit of unions that have successfully organised students at universities and TAFEs, to develop a best practice kit;
 - (b) lobbying for all TAFE courses to include a work and industrial relations session;
 - (c) affiliates identifying relevant courses in TAFEs and Universities;
 - (d) unions addressing students during courses;
 - (e) establishing student membership or reduced membership fees;
 - (f) linking unions with student clubs as a means of organising students in 'like' study faculties;
 - (g) liaising with employment offices on tertiary campuses; and
 - (h) supporting the establishment of University and TAFE college student/ worker union networks.

Accessing Young Workers

16. The *Future Strategies* report highlights the need for unions to make a commitment to new member organising. Unions need to actively target young workers, who are a critical source of new members and future activists. Affiliates are encouraged to:
- (a) audit the average age of members and activists;
 - (b) map areas of coverage to identify potential young members; and
 - (c) develop a targeted organising plan.
17. The ACTU, labour councils and unions need to ensure their message is reaching young workers by:

- (a) Participating in a communications audit to assess best practice for reaching young workers; and
 - (b) conducting an audit of skills and techniques currently being utilised by unions to reach young workers to establish best practice for other unions to utilise.
18. The future of trade unionism relies on taking responsibility for portraying a positive image of unions to young workers. Many young non-members are turned away from trade unions when they have a problem and thus do not see any value in union membership. Young workers who can be encouraged to be involved in 'creating their union' are instead being turned away. Affiliates can address this by:
- (a) Expressing a sympathetic view on under 19 year olds joining a union when they have an existing issue.
 - (b) Appointing a Youth contact officer in each branch to encourage collective activism from these young non members.
 - (c) Supporting and assessing the South Australian pilot project currently being developed to act as an alternative means of bringing people to the trade union movement. It involves the creation of an Advocacy Centre, which gives advice and assistance to young workers and encourages them to join their union. The Queensland experience, Young People @ Work, should also be looked at.
 - (d) Seeing an individual worker as a potential lead into a non-union workplace.
19. The ACTU and labour councils understand that it is often difficult for young workers to know which union they should belong to. This can be addressed by:
- (a) Providing a 1300 number to be advertised as a national link for young workers to their trade unions.
 - (b) Actively promoting this number to encourage membership and awareness of trade unionism.
 - (c) Referring contacts obtained through this number to youth officers.
 - (d) Establishing a presence at non-workplace sites. Some of these non-workplaces may include events such as Big Day Out, Fringe Festival, Rock Eisteddfod, University bars, Youth community organizations, National Youth Week, or websites.

- (e) Establishing on websites a youth link to the ACTU website to take people to a vibrant up to date site for young workers.
- (f) Assessing the success of the SA Advocacy Centre with a view to spreading this program to all states based on its outcomes.

Involving Young Members and Officials

- 20. There is a need to establish what trade unions are currently doing for young members and officials in unions, to support future strategies. The ACTU and affiliates will participate in an audit of internal and external youth structures.
- 21. The ACTU and affiliates need to encourage and develop young officials (especially women) across the union movement by:
 - (a) putting in place a mentoring system similar to the mentor system for Organising Works, aimed at officials aged under 30; and
 - (b) running and participating in programs such as Union Summer and Organising Works.
- 22. In recognition of the importance of maintaining communication networks as young officials grow up, and the benefits gained in sharing successes in organising young workers, the ACTU will:
 - (a) continue to have youth representation in ACTU structures, including a representative on Executive and a Youth Committee;
 - (b) commit resources to mentor and guide those representatives;
 - (c) support a second Youth forum being held over the next three years; and
 - (d) continue publication of an e-bulletin for young union officials as a means of encouraging and acknowledging the contribution of youth.
- 23. Affiliates and labour councils can support youth in union structures by:
 - (a) Establishing Youth Committees in all labour council's. Those that exist have been successful in generating activity among youth. These groups form an essential part of the youth movement and support the ACTU Youth Committee.
 - (b) Involving young members and officials within decision-making bodies and creating networks of young members. Mentoring projects are a successful way of assisting this.

- (c) Annually focusing on organising strategies in youth areas of membership.
- (d) Actively seeking funding within the community for youth based projects. Most labour councils have had success finding these additional resources.
- (e) Seeking a means of drawing young workers to union membership by offering fee structures based on hours worked, or a “no work means no fee” policy.
- (f) Utilise modern technology for example SMS, to update messages and images to attract young workers.

Campaigning

- 24. Unions and the ACTU will continue to advocate improvements in young workers conditions and develop opportunities for young workers to be involved. To demonstrate this commitment it is important to run a campaign in the next Congress term:
 - (a) involving the workplace, industrial, political and community fronts of activity; and
 - (b) centred on youth related issues such as, unpaid work experience, junior wages, bullying or trainees and apprentices’ conditions.

Services

- 25. Member Connect will look for services attractive to young workers such as mobile phone deals, seeking access for casuals to loans from financial institutions, music vouchers and concert tickets.