

Future Strategies Part 2

Unions and the Workplace

Policy

ACTU CONGRESS 2003

Policy Framework

1. In the implementation of Part 2, Unions and the workplace, of the Future Strategies - Unions Working For a Fairer Australia report, the key issues for unions and the ACTU over the next three years include:

(a) developing union delegate numbers, roles, education and effectiveness;

(b) improving union communication and campaigning capacity;

(c) building the commitment of unions to growth and the union structures, processes and resources to deliver it; and

(d) continuing efforts to ensure that the make-up of union decision making structures and processes reflect the membership of unions including the proportional representation of women as workplace representatives, organising and industrial staff and elected officers.

Union Delegates

2. Unions will work to build union delegate numbers and networks through:

(a) The increased use of workplace delegate audits to assist unions prioritise, plan and resource programs aimed at increasing delegate numbers and competencies.

(b) Support for the ACTU survey of Australian union delegates being conducted by Drs Barbara Pocock and David Peetz.

(c) Consideration of more flexible and task-orientated approaches to union workplace structures that encourage wider union involvement and stronger union organisation.

3. Unions will work to improve the effectiveness of union education through:

- (a) Increasing the amount of union resources available for union education.
- (b) Increasing the flexibility of how, when, where and by whom union education is delivered.
- (c) Supporting and participating in union delegate education programs delivered through individual unions and The Union Education Foundation, and lobbying all State Governments to help fund union education.

4. Unions will work to build improved rights for union delegates through:

- (a) Pursuit of the charter of union delegates rights in union bargaining.
- (b) Lobbying governments and political parties to legislate union delegate rights.

Representative Union Decision Making Processes

5. Union structures and roles that reflect the make-up of union membership and encourage the equitable participation of all groups in the process and functioning of the union are important to building union effectiveness. This is particularly important for women workers. In pursuing this aim the following will be important objectives. Over the next three years the ACTU will work to:

- (a) Continue its commitment to affirmative action for women in its decision making processes, and calls on affiliates to continue efforts to ensure that women are proportionally represented as workplace representatives, organising and industrial staff and elected officers.
- (b) Reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that its governing bodies and structures include at least 50% women.
- (c) Implement a process for monitoring and regularly reporting progress in achieving gender balance within union decision making processes and structures.
- (d) Work with affiliates to identify and evaluate the applicability of best practice models from other sectors.

Union Communication and Campaigning Capacity

6. Unions will work to build communication and campaigning capacity through:

- (a) Utilising methods including polling, surveys, focus groups and research to identify workplace issues in the lead up to bargaining campaigns.

(b) Ensuring that union communications in the workplace are relevant to the workplace issues, and language and culture of the employees, and are effectively distributed.

(c) Using all available pressure points on employers during campaigns including media, consumer, public, political and investor pressure.

(d) Encouraging rank and file members and delegates to speak to the media, with appropriate training and support, during campaigns.

(e) Considering use of the ACTU Communications and Campaigns Section for advice and support.

7. Where the ACTU seeks to initiate National Wage or Test Case claims, it will ensure that a process is first put in place which enables affiliates to:

(a) Take the proposed claim to workplaces for endorsement.

(b) Report back within set timeframes to the ACTU on levels of membership support for the claim.

(c) Campaign around progress of the claim once formally endorsed by the ACTU.

Commitment, Structures and Resources for Union Growth

8. Effective union organisation in the workplace needs to be supported by appropriate structures and strategies in the union office. Unions will work to build union effectiveness through:

(a) Strengthening the commitment of unions at a leadership level to the task of building union membership and organisation.

(b) Increasing the involvement of union delegates and members in debate and decision making processes about the direction and priorities of the union.

(c) Effective use of union research and planning processes to underpin union organising and membership growth strategies, including at an industry and multi-union level.

(d) Effective use of technology like call centres and websites to support union servicing and organising activity.

(e) Developing the roles of union staff to ensure they support union priorities.

(f) Ensuring the recruitment of new starters is a bargaining and organising priority for the union.