

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

Future Strategy for Wages Policy

The Wages and Employment Conditions Policy adopted at this Congress reflects our promise to working Australia that unions are committed to lifting real wages for all workers.

This promise is underpinned by the fundamental commitment of Australian Unions to improving the position of the lowest paid while continuing to provide career paths to all workers which recognise their skill, responsibility and the conditions under which their work is performed.

Under successive systems, the same process has been used to set minimum wages and to adjust the rates applying in skills based classification structures. Congress notes with regret that this has not only failed to produce fair minimum wages, but also compressed relativities, resulting in a fall in the value of real wages for workers with trade and higher qualifications. At the same time, bargaining has failed to lift the real wages of significant numbers of Australian workers. In the absence of a changed approach, this situation will continue.

Accordingly, Congress resolves that the ACTU & affiliates undertake a process to review current arrangements and determine a future strategy in relation to the Annual Wage Review by Fair Work Australia, the setting of Award rates of pay more generally and wage increases available from bargaining. The strategy will have three objectives:

- a) To increase the real wages of Australian workers;
- b) To restore skills based relativities; and
- c) To ensure that Australian workers capture a fair share of productivity gains.

This process will consider all relevant factors, including the needs of the lowest paid, traditional relativities, living standards, market rates of pay, appropriate productivity measures for various sectors, traditional undervaluation of some forms of work and the need to continue to promote effective union collective bargaining.

This proposal will be developed through a specialist committee (including appropriate external expert assistance) to be selected by the meeting of the Executive in July. A full report and recommendations will be provided to the November 2012 Executive meeting.

Moved: Louise Tarrant, United Voice

Seconded: Tim Ayres, AMWU