

Tuesday, 15 May 2012

Jeff Lawrence

Congress acknowledges the enormous contribution made by Jeff Lawrence over a career of more than three decades to Australian unions, the broader labour movement, and the lives of working people.

It is a career that has spanned both 17 years as National Secretary and five years as Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

Jeff Lawrence has earned universal respect from workers, from unions, from Governments and from industry for his decency, integrity, and his commitment to enhancing the lives of working people.

Congress in particular recognises the personal commitment Jeff Lawrence has made since he first joined the union movement to improving wages and conditions for Australia's lowest paid workers.

At the ACTU, he has personally invested a great deal into the Annual Wage Review because of this commitment.

Jeff Lawrence assumed the office of ACTU Secretary at a crucial time in our movement's history, and steered the Your Rights at Work campaign into and beyond the 2007 Federal Election.

He led negotiations for the Fair Work Act, which abolished WorkChoices and restored a safety net, protection from unfair dismissal, and an emphasis on collective bargaining.

The achievements of Australian unions over the past five years have included the introduction of a universal paid parental leave scheme, an increase in the superannuation guarantee, the abolition of the ABCC, improvements to Labor Party policy with respect to the industrial relations agenda, and a focus on organising and growth.

The proportion of the workforce covered by collective bargaining is at an all-time high, and Award wages have grown in real terms.

Under Jeff Lawrence's leadership, the Australian union movement has been united and disciplined like never before and this is a tribute to his personal qualities.

Jeff Lawrence has been a leader and mentor to the next generation of Australian union leaders, for which Australian workers and unions owe him a debt of gratitude.