

## Organising Women in Unions

### Advancing the representation and participation of women in unions

1. Congress is committed in ensuring that women workers have strong and effective union representation in their workplace.
2. Congress notes that women now make up almost half of the paid workforce and half of total union membership.<sup>1</sup> The capacity of the union movement to represent and organise women depends on its ability to reflect their views and address their issues. In order to achieve this, women members must be able to fully participate in all levels of union decision making processes and structures.
3. Congress notes the Report's recommendations that unions can assist women to continue to grow within the union movement by ensuring their industrial needs are adequately represented in the union's bargaining priorities and by removing the barriers women face in accessing senior and elected roles within their union.
4. Removing these barriers will improve the union's ability to attract the best possible leadership talent and tap into the growth potential of organising women workers.
5. Congress encourages all unions to use the Report's recommendations as a basis to review their activities in regard to women, including how they attract, retain and develop women members, delegates, employees, elected officials and leaders.
6. Congress affirms the July 2011 Executive resolution that:
  - Endorsed the recommendations of the Women in Unions Report 2010 and confirmed ongoing commitment to funding and participating in the survey;
  - Supported the proposal for a regular, streamlined survey process which is to be conducted every three years with the next one in 2014, prior to Congress 2015;
  - Provided for regular reporting of survey results as part of the formal ACTU Congress agenda; and

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<sup>1</sup> Abs Employee earnings, benefits and Trade Union membership, August 2010.

- Acknowledged that the accuracy of the survey results depends on full participation by all unions, and strongly encouraging all unions to continue to complete the survey.
7. Congress commits all unions, TLCs and the ACTU to implement the Report's Recommendations where appropriate.
  8. The ACTU will assist, support and advise unions regarding implementation of the Recommendations where appropriate.

## **Women in Unions Report 2010**

9. ACTU Congress adopts the following recommendations from the Report.

### **Women's Participation in Union Structures**

10. Encourage women delegates and employees to participate in union structures by:
  - a) Setting appropriate goals, actions, resources and timeframes to increase women's active participation in the union;
  - b) Ensuring women members are consulted and their issues addressed, when developing union industrial priorities and growth campaigns;
  - c) Removing barriers which discourage the participation of women in union activities by taking into consideration the availability of employees and delegates with family responsibilities;
  - d) Identifying and sponsoring women delegates to move into roles including elected positions;
  - e) Encouraging and supporting women employees to take on more senior roles within the union;
  - f) Ensuring women employees are afforded equal opportunities to access career development such as acting in higher duties and board positions;\
  - g) Developing policies for union employees including the right to part time work following parental leave, flexible work arrangements, protection against sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination. Provide mandatory training for all officials and union employees regarding these union policies;
  - h) Consider establishing dedicated positions for women on union Committees of Management, Executive, Council, Congress, and other high level union committees;
  - i) Ensuring there is a union official(s) who has responsibility in the union for women's issues and reports at each union executive;

- j) Establishing a women's committee and regular women's conference;
- k) Monitoring and reporting to the union executive annually on the representation of women at all levels within the union; and
- l) If not already required by legislation, considering submitting EEO reports annually to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA).

### **Peak Council Leadership and Representation of Women**

#### **11. Ensure peak council leadership and representation of women by:**

- a) Ensuring women member's issues are included in industrial, growth and campaign priorities, actions and resources set at Union, TLC, ACTU Executive and Congress level;
- b) Ensuring all unions have a representative on the ACTU Women's Committee and integrating the work of the Committee into other recognised priorities of the ACTU, including in education, industrial and campaigns;
- c) Funding and participating in the ACTU Women in Unions survey which is to be conducted 12 months before each ACTU Congress with the findings to be reported as part of the formal Congress Agenda;
- d) Ensuring that women remain proportionately represented at ACTU Congress and include consideration of women's issues in each item at Congress; and
- e) Continuing to promote and support the Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) network by encouraging members to attend and actively participate in the biennial conferences.

### **Bargaining and Industrial Agenda**

#### **12. Ensure women members' issues are included in the bargaining and industrial agenda by:**

- a) Developing bargaining claims in consultation with women members including consideration of the suggested provisions contained in the ACTU Work and Family Bargaining Guide;
- b) Bargaining for appropriate facilities and conditions for women workers in male dominated workplaces, and removing barriers which unfairly discourage women's participation;
- c) Ensuring women representatives are on all bargaining committees; and
- d) Implementing a bargaining checklist to ensure that women's claims do not "drop off" and review achievement of women member's bargaining priorities.

## Programs and Resources

13. Continuing, improving and extending the Anna Stewart Memorial Project by developing a comprehensive, structured curriculum and mentoring program for women union activists;
  - a) Developing materials and resources, publicising union actions supporting women and providing role models of active women in the union; and
  - b) Ensuring union and ACTU training of delegates includes gender equality issues and union policies.