

Thursday, 24 September 2020

Vale Peter Simpson

Statement from ACTU Secretary Sally McManus on behalf of the ACTU

The trade union movement is mourning the passing of Peter (Simmo) Simpson, 57, who died this morning after a brave fight with Stage IV Metastatic Melanoma.

Simmo was a linesman and a member of his union, the Electrical Trades Union.

He moved from NSW to Queensland and as a young delegate helped rebuild his union after the SEQEB dispute which was a bruising and bitter fight against the casualising of jobs by the Joh Bjelke-Petersen Government.

Simmo rose to become the leader of the Electrical Trades Union in Queensland and the NT. He led the Not4Sale campaign against electricity privatisation.

Simmo was eventually vindicated as attempts to privatise electricity led to the defeat of the Campbell Newman Government.

His legacy is that those electricity assets were not privatised in Queensland and the fighting machine he built his union into, with strong delegates structures. Unionists across Queensland and the country learnt so much from Simmo, in particular the importance of not giving up.

After his diagnosis, he stood down from his position in the union to concentrate in his health and time with his loved ones but that didn't mean he left the struggle. In fact he took on many more fights, supporting various campaigns, taking on opponents on social media and remaining alive for as long as he could, defying the odds many times to stay with us in the battle.

Simmo was the best of what unionism is. Committed to the progress of working people and their right to a better life. Willing to stand up for the values he held so dearly. Always up for the fight.

He was principled and respected, a deft strategist and an incredibly tough fighter. Simmo understood that everything the working class had gained over generations was a result of years of struggle and solidarity, and he committed himself wholly to the movement's aim of improving the lives of working people.

His passing is keenly felt across our movement and especially amongst comrades in Queensland and his ETU family.

The love of the whole union movement is with his dear partner Penny Tovey. Penny and Simmo were a team, their love for each other and her care for Peter the last few years has showed us all the depth of their love and beautiful comradeship. Our condolences are also to his mother, children and grandchildren.

RIP Simmo. A magnificent fighter right until the end.

ENDS

Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200