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Workers who turned the tide on bank offshoring are honoured at Australian union awards

A group of workers who took on one of the big four banks and reversed a decision to send more than 500 jobs offshore were honoured last night at the ACTU annual union awards.

The Finance Sector Union members at the ANZ Bank's call centres at Mulgrave and South Melbourne were presented with the best workplace campaign award for their action which saved the jobs from being sent to the Philippines and New Zealand.

The Australian Education Union's 'I Give A Gonski' campaign was also honoured as the best communications strategy at last night's awards.

In June last year, through a leaked document, workers discovered that ANZ had plans to offshore the 590 jobs from the two call centres. FSU delegates got together and formed a working group to fight back and encourage their colleagues to take action.

They embarked on a multi-faceted campaign and spent countless hours organising and attending regular meetings offsite, collecting signatures for a petition, raising community awareness and engaging local politicians. Information materials were created to be shared at work, for community stalls, BBQs and community farmers' markets.

The group also met face-to-face with ANZ management to raise the issue of job security, customer information and member consultation. In October, management announced that it would still be closing the Mulgrave site but all workers would be offered positions at the South Melbourne call centre, keeping the full 590 jobs onshore.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the FSU members' successful campaign was an inspiration to other workers facing an uncertain future through the anti-jobs policies of the Abbott Government.

"At a time when tens of thousands of workers are looking at unemployment either through factory closures or off shoring, the FSU members show us there can be another way.

"The decision to offshore was only ever about increasing bank profit am but the workers refused to take no for an answer and campaigned in their workplace and in the community to save the jobs. ANZ was forced to listen, and in the end the decision was reversed.

"We honour them for their efforts, but just as importantly this is a message to the Abbott Government to step up to the plate and do more to keep jobs here rather than wipe its hands of any responsibility for Australian employment."

Other award winners included Penny Carr of The Services Union in Queensland, who is delegate of the year, while Lindsay Fraser, who recently retired as National Assistant Secretary of the Construction Division of the CFMEU, was given the OHS individual award.

Ms Kearney said the AEU's 'I Give A Gonski' campaign, which won best communications strategy, had provided a new path to campaigning for schools funding reform.

"This campaign has reached beyond targeted constituents and has strong support from communities right across Australia," she said.

The full list of ACTU National Union Awards winners and photos are available at www.actu.org.au

Media contact: Carla De Campo, 0410 579 575