

# Union Action Plan

**Superannuation  
– Adequacy,  
Equity and  
Universality**



**ACTU**  
CONGRESS 21



# ACTU Congress briefing:

## Superannuation – Adequacy, Equity and Universality

### Why it matters:

The union movement won compulsory employer-paid superannuation through national worker-led campaigns. The superannuation system is one of the labour movement's proudest achievements. Due to the compulsory superannuation system, workers now have more than \$2.9 trillion in retirement savings. Many workers retiring are now doing so with savings they never would have accumulated without employer-paid superannuation. Due to superannuation, more workers can retire with security and dignity.

Despite the establishment of superannuation, too many low-income workers – especially women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – are retiring into poverty. Women workers retire, on average with less than half of the superannuation of men. The number of women who are homeless is rising due to the gender pay gap, intersectional age and gender discrimination for older women, and structural barriers to women accumulating superannuation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers retire on even less, and many are unable to enjoy the fruits of their retirement savings due to the life expectancy gap. An increasing number of workers face retirements with little to no super due to the rise of the gig economy and insecure work.

As each of these gaps widen, the threat to undermine the universality of our superannuation system grows. It is incumbent upon our movement to campaign to close these gaps.

In order to fight for a decent retirement for all, we must ensure that we fight for equal retirement outcomes for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, and a truly universal system which does not arbitrarily exclude workers.

We need to achieve adequacy, equality, and universality.

To do this, our aim is to achieve 15 per cent super on every dollar earned for all workers.

And as custodians of workers' retirement savings, we have a duty to ensure that workers' money is invested for workers' dignity in retirement. This responsibility is borne from our roles as founders, key stakeholders, owners, and directors of industry super funds. In executing this responsibility, Unions understand investments can create good jobs for both men and women, in sustainable Australian businesses, ventures and services. To achieve this funds and unions will work in collaboration, recognising the shared goals of funds to ensure that working people are better off during work and into retirement.

Workers' retirement savings should be invested for the total benefit of working people, through their working life and into retirement. Unions are central to achieving this objective.

## Key Facts

- Women retire with less than half of the superannuation of men and older women are the fastest-growing cohort of homeless Australians,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians retire with less than half of the superannuation of non-Indigenous Australians,
- Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers are required to work for the CDP without work rights including superannuation entitlements,
- Workers under the age of 18 and domestic workers are not eligible to earn superannuation unless they work more than 30 hours a week,
- Workers in the gig economy and contractors do not earn super on their wages, putting many low- and middle-income workers backwards in their retirement savings, and
- More than 2.85 million workers have \$5.9 billion in retirement savings stolen every year.

## Australian Unions Believe

- Every worker deserves 15 per cent super on every dollar earned, and exclusions to the universality of the system should be abolished,
- Women must have equal retirement outcomes and proactive steps must be taken to address this including the removal of systemic barriers which prevent this,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers must have equal retirement outcomes and the systemic barriers which prevent this should be removed,
- Superannuation theft should be eliminated, and workers should have the right to recover their unpaid super,
- Injury should not cost you your retirement, and gaps in superannuation payments due to injury should be closed,
- It is in the best interests of working people that superannuation funds invest in ways which benefit workers in retirement and during their working lives both domestically and globally,
- The union movement has a responsibility borne from our roles as founders, member representatives, owners, directors, and custodians of industry super funds and workers' retirement savings, and,
- The custodians workers elect to represent them on the boards should be highly skilled and dedicated to improving the investment and stewardship of workers' retirement savings.

## Action Plan 2021-25

Australian Unions will work together on the following priorities:

- Women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers need urgent restoration of inadequate retirement savings due to systemic inequality in the system, through an advanced increase to 15 per cent super on every dollar earned.
- Superannuation must be paid on parental leave, both Government and Employer-provided.
- Superannuation should be universal, and paid to workers under the age of 18, gig economy workers, contractors and those engaged in domestic work.
- Lower the Age Pension eligibility age, abolish the CDP, lower the preservation age, and any corresponding tax concessions available for retiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.
- Superannuation should be recognised as an industrial right and inserted in the National Employment Standards, paid at the same time as wages, and on any workers' compensation payments.
- Protecting the centrality of the union movement in the Governance, ownership and custodianship of industry super funds and workers' retirement savings.
- Ensuring the culture, remuneration and investment practices of industry superannuation funds and their collective vehicles reflect the expectations and values of working people.
- Projecting our values and vision for workers capital beyond our shores through the Global Unions Committee of Workers Capital and working to ensure that those working to manage and invest workers retirement savings across the world are accountable to workers best interest both in their experience of work today and their retirements