

Tuesday, 11 August 2026

Unions appoint new ACTU Secretary-elect

The ACTU Executive has appointed Melissa Donnelly, as the new Secretary-elect of the ACTU, replacing Sally McManus, who will step down on 30 August after a decade leading the union movement.

Melissa is the current National Secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and at 44 will be one of the youngest ever ACTU Secretaries.

The ACTU Executive met on Monday to appoint Melissa Donnelly as the ACTU's Secretary-elect, effective 31 August.

Melissa Donnelly has led her union for seven years and has served on the ACTU Executive over this time. During her tenure, the CPSU has grown by 23%, and she has overseen the reversal of the outsourcing of Government advice and services to big consultancy firms, secured groundbreaking work-from-home rights, delivered 18 weeks paid parental leave for both parents, improved pay and has protected jobs and services.

As a young lawyer, Melissa led the fight against the Howard Government that sought to stop CPSU members participating in protest action against their WorkChoices laws, which stripped rights away from workers.

The appointment of a new ACTU President will occur later this year.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

"Melissa Donnelly has strong, overwhelming support across all unions to become the ACTU's 11th Secretary. She is smart, strategic and completely focused on the needs of working people.

"The average union member is a 44-year-old working mother and so is Melissa. She's a year younger than I was when I took up the office and represents generational change. With two school-aged children and having led a large union, she well knows the pressures working people are under.

"She has my full support, and I look forward to assisting her as she steps into the role."

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"Melissa understands what matters to Australian workers and their families. She brings her extensive experience of fighting for workers' pay, job security and flexible work and winning better rights for workers to her new role as ACTU Secretary.

"Melissa is strong, strategic and passionate about fairness and will be a great advocate for Australian workers and our movement.

"I look forward to working with Melissa in the transition to a new ACTU leadership team between now and the end of the year."

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary-elect, Melissa Donnelly:

"It is a tremendous honour to have the support of the union movement as I take on this important role.

"Following in the footsteps of Sally is no easy task. She has dedicated her life to fighting for fairer, safer and more secure workplaces.

"I am eager to get to work delivering real outcomes for working people and advancing the interests of workers across the country.

"Most of all, I am looking forward to meeting union members from every corner of Australia and serving alongside you as we work to lift living standards and secure a better future for all."

ENDS

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