



WOMEN IN THE UNION COURSE

The next Women in the Union course will be held on Friday 24 July at PSA House, 160 Clarence Street, Sydney.

Topics include: The history of women's participation in the workforce; Your rights & entitlements; Union structures; Assertiveness, EEO and anti-discrimination. This is a one-day course. **MORE INFORMATION AND ONLINE REGISTRATION**

(<http://psa.asn.au/training/general-training-courses/>)

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE (PPL) ACTU PPL CAMPAIGN

Vigorous lobbying is now taking place in Canberra on PPL. The ACTU is in discussion with crossbenchers, women's groups and employer organisations in an effort to gain support to retain the current PPL scheme and negotiate improvements.

If you are interested in being part of this campaign, the ACTU requires more case studies of union members who are entitled to employer-funded and additional paid parental leave and would be negatively affected by Canberra's proposal to remove access to the Government-funded component of the PPL scheme. Thank you to those who have already provided case studies.

The ACTU are seeking 'real people' willing to accompany Ged Kearney to Canberra or speak to the media. This includes employees who are currently pregnant, on parental leave or intending to have a family.

If you would like to be part of the campaign at federal level, please email the PSA Gender and Equity Analyst jsingleton@psa.asn.au for more information or to share your case study.

The ACTU has also launched **A NATIONAL PETITION** to save Paid Parental Leave.

(http://www.australianunions.org.au/parental_leave_petition)

UNIONS NSW PPL CAMPAIGN

The **STOP THE PPL CUTS** campaign webpage is now live. It includes an **ONLINE PETITION, FACT SHEET** and **RESOURCES** you can use to spread the word in your workplace and community.

(<http://www.unionsnsw.org.au/paidparentalleave>)

WIMDOI CONFERENCE 2015

This year marked the 21st anniversary of the Women in Male Dominated Industries and Occupations (WIMDOI) conference, held at Sydney's Trades Hall in May this year.

WIMDOI is a conference held every two years, with the venue rotated between states. The conference is open to all women who are members of any union and who work in male-dominated industries or occupations.

HISTORY OF WIMDOI

Australia has one of the most industrially segregated workforces in the western world. While female participation in the labour force has increased, most women are still concentrated in 'pink' occupations and industries such as

health, education and support services.

More than 20 years ago, when some women from the MUA returned from a very enjoyable women's conference, one remarked "wouldn't it be nice if there was something like that for women like us?" No-one needed to ask what she meant by "women like us". They found that most women in male-dominated areas felt the same. While they enjoyed women's conferences, these tended to focus on general women's issues, while their union's focus in the workplace was on more traditional 'male' issues. These women felt different from both the men in their industry and other women.

When women in male-dominated areas raise issues such as the adequacy of women's amenities on isolated mine sites, many find it results not only in tension with bosses, but also with male colleagues.

Discussions at the conference confirmed that, irrespective of the industry or occupation, women working in male-dominated workplaces face similar issues. Their workplace experiences are more similar to those of other women in male-dominated jobs, than to that of most women. The women's stories at this conference were rare and inspiring.

I would encourage all women working in male-dominated areas to consider registering in the future. Future dates and locations will be publicised in future editions of Women@Work.

The large percentage of young women present was striking at a union conference, which is at odds with trends discussed below.

Speakers at WIMDOI included:

GED KEARNEY, ACTU: CURRENT ACTI CAMPAIGN

Ged Kearney spoke about the current ACTU focus on: workers' rights; Medicare; affordable education; public services; fair pensions and taxation. Ged highlighted how women and unions have changed society, including winning the fight for paid parental leave and 'right to request' provisions in Awards and Enterprise Agreements. Much of what has been achieved is now under attack and many of the attacks are ideological, such as the superannuation co-contribution for low income earners – which many women receive on account of the pay gap. The Productivity Commission, at the behest of Government, is also questioning penalty rates, and big business argues all industrial regulation is just red tape. Women are over-represented in insecure employment and the gender pay gap is widening in Australia.

LUDO MCFERRAN, UNIVERSITY OF NSW: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A WHS ISSUE

While little research has been done in Australia, overseas research confirms that, just as one in three workers is a victim of domestic violence, around one in three workers are also perpetrators such acts. Just as domestic violence can affect victims' work, US research has demonstrated that it also affects the work of perpetrators. The research in the US revealed that 80 percent of the perpetrators of domestic violence surveyed admitted to either taking time off work or using work time and resources to perform acts such as making calls to the victim. Twenty percent admitted to causing or nearly causing a workplace injury because they were distracted – revealing a serious WHS issue and 83 percent

stated their supervisor was aware of what they were doing and did nothing. In some cases court orders were already in place.

This raises the interesting question of vicarious liability employers. Canada has amended WHS legislation in light of this research. In Australia, the Law Reform Commission has recommended that Safe Work Australia follow the Canadian lead. Safe Work Australia has declined to do so.

Ludo has developed a training program for employers on DV which can be delivered in workplaces.

JUDY GRAY, CFMEU: WOMEN AND BULLYING IN MALE-DOMINATED WORKPLACES

Judy spoke about her experiences assisting women in male-dominated industries experiencing bullying and sexual harassment. For women in male-dominated industries, particularly in isolated areas, the bullying and harassment that is reported is often so severe that it is, or borders on being, a criminal offence. Judy cited an example of a female engineer, the only woman on an isolated mine site, who was physically attacked at night when using the toilet and threatened with rape if she did not leave.

PATRICIA FERNANDEZ, MARITIME STEWARD

Patricia spoke about her experience of being the only female on a boat with up to 260 men for up to five weeks at a time. While she gave examples of experiences that were unpleasant, she has also been able to visit locations few have the opportunity to visit, like Antarctica.

DR RAE COOPER, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DISADVANTAGE

Rae talked about 'glass ceilings', where women do not get promoted to senior positions as often as men; and the 'glass walls' that make Australia's workforce one of the most gender segregated in the developed world, with women concentrated in the 'pink' industries of health, education and support work. She also discussed 'sticky floors', where women often enter the workforce at low job grades then get 'stuck' in base grade positions which are low-paid, and often insecure.

In 2015 the gender pay gap in Australia hit a 30-year high of 18.8 percent.

WOMEN IN UNIONS REPORT

Rae has completed recent research on women in unions.

In 1990, around 45 percent of men and around 35 percent of women were members of a union. In 2012 around 19 percent of both men and women were union members. This is the story of the collapse of the male-dominated manufacturing industry in Australia, the growth of the feminised health and service sectors and the casualisation of the Australian workforce.

Within unions overall, 49 percent of unpaid delegate positions are women; 33% of honorary positions, such as presidents paid only a small honorarium, are women; and 28% of secretaries, which are full-time paid positions, are women. The figures have led to critics labelling unions, like boards, as

"pale, male and stale".

Rea also discussed some research done by the University of Sydney Business School on young women and unions. The current generation of young women entering the workforce are no less politically active than any previous generation of women, but tend to be active in different areas and in different ways. Workplace issues are not currently high on their agenda. Unionism is perceived as a bit 'old-fashioned' and they tend to be active online as opposed to other forms of protest. This is an interesting, but by no means unassailable, challenge for unions.

KARA KEYS, ACTU INDIGENOUS OFFICER: ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN UNIONS

Kara's amazing talk was rewarded with a standing ovation.

Aboriginal history was not taught in Australian schools until quite recently. What is still little known is the role played by Aboriginal Australians in the union movement and their contribution to industrial rights. The role of Aboriginal women is especially little known and appreciated. This was the focus of Kara's talk.

Aboriginal Australians have served in all wars since the Boer War – despite not being counted in the census or being able to vote at that time. Many who applied to enlist were denied on the basis of race. The ability of ATSI people to enlist fluctuated with 'supply and demand' – they were allowed to enlist when there were not enough service personnel but not allowed when there were. Many were promised full citizenship upon their return – but were barred from some clubs and were not given the usual parcel of land upon return granted to other returned service personnel.

For most of Australia's history it was illegal to pay Aboriginal people the same wages as white Australians.

Disputes over pay and conditions led to the 1946 Pilbarra strike by Aboriginal pastoral workers. The three-year strike is still the longest such action in Australian history. The 1966 Wave Hill strike – or 'Wave Hill walk off' – is another notable example of industrial action by Aboriginal Australians. Aboriginal women played key roles in these strikes, not only in supporting the workers on strike, but as leaders.

PSA WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY REPORT

Employers with 100 or more employees must report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency annually under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012. The PSA's 2015 report has been lodged with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The principal objects of the Act are to: promote & improve gender equality, including equal remuneration; remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce; the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender in employment; foster workplace consultation on gender equality; improve productivity and competitiveness through the advancement of gender equality in the workplace.

THE PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF NSW 2015 WGEA REPORT is available on our website.

<http://psa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PSA-Public-report-form-to-WGEA-2015.pdf>

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Authorised by Steve Turner, Acting General Secretary
Public Service Association of NSW, 160 Clarence Street Sydney



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