

PSA CPSU NSW

# WOMEN EMBRACE EQUITY



PSA CPSU NSW WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 5-6 SEPTEMBER 2023

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## EMBRACE EQUITY

5-6 SEPTEMBER 2023  
PROGRAM

### DAY ONE

**Tuesday 5 September 2023**

8:30am Registration

9:00am Welcome to Country: Aunty Joan Bell, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council

9:10am Welcome to Conference: Leanne Smith, Chair, PSA CPSU NSW Women's Council

9:15am Housekeeping

9:20am Embracing Equity: Troy Wright, Acting General Secretary, PSA CPSU NSW

9:25am Building on What Women Want; Nicole Jess, President, PSA CPSU NSW

9:30am Opening: Jodie Harrison, Minister for Women, Seniors, the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

10:00am Keynote Speaker: Jean Kittson, Broadcaster and Author

**10:45am Morning Tea: Sponsored by Maxxia**

11:15am Reconciliation Action Plan: Jami Walk, Gidget Foundation

11:45am Sisters Sharing Stories - Truth Telling: Shanice Leadbeatter and Erica Smits, PSA CPSU NSW Aboriginal Council

**12:15pm**

1:30pm

2:00pm

2:30pm

3:00pm

3:35pm

4:00pm

6:00pm

**Lunch:**

**Sponsored by WageCover**

Homelessness: Annabelle Daniel, Women's Community Shelters

Reforms to the NSW IR system: Sophie Cotsis, Minister for Industrial Relations and Work Health and Safety

The Gender Super Gap: Sarah O'Brien, General Manager, Regulatory and Technical Services, Women in Super

Homelessness and Housing Issues: Jenny Leong, Greens Spokesperson on Housing and Homelessness, Women and Industrial Relations

Artist's Journey: Lua Pellegrini, Child Safety and Policy Officer, NSW Office of the Children's Guardian

Close of Day One

**DINNER**

Club York  
Level 1, Red Room  
95-99 York Street Sydney 2000

**Sponsored by Australian Mutual Bank and McNally Jones Staff**

## DAY TWO

### Wednesday 6 September 2023

- 9:00am Welcome Back
- 9:05am Recap Video from Day One
- 9:10am Back to Work
- 9:15am Disability Inclusion: Leisl Tesch, Member for Gosford
- 10:00am Responding with Compassion – Domestic and Family Violence Leave: Karen Willis, Unions NSW
- 10:30am Housing: Rose Jackson, Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Water, Youth and the North Coast
- 11:00am Morning tea: Sponsored by State Super**
- 11:30pm Introducing the new SafeWork NSW Respect at Work Taskforce: Christina Hey-Nguyen and Michael van Dyk, SafeWork NSW
- 12:00pm Reproductive Wellbeing Leave: Sydney Colussi, University of Sydney
- 12:30pm Close of Conference

### Women's Council

- 1:00pm Restricted to Women's Councillors and Women Central Councillors



# PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

## **We need to work together to achieve equality and equity in the workplace.**

What a great opportunity we have here. PSA CPSU NSW Women's Conference gives us the chance to make changes that will help not only our members, but women throughout NSW and Australia.

Workplaces with better gender representation will better deliver services to women. They are a better reflection of the society in which they operate.

In addition, our pioneering wins often flow onto other parts of the industrial landscape. For example, PSA CPSU NSW women were pioneers of Domestic Violence Leave, which is now being adopted nationwide.

Women's Conference gives us our space to work together and achieve these often historic wins. However, our support for each other need not stop after the final speaker gives their closing remarks.

We need to remember the women who helped us get to where we are today. We need to remember women such as Jean Arnot, who campaigned for pay equity when such a notion was unheard of.

We need to also look to the future. We need to support the women in our workforces who are just starting

out in their careers, or those who are still climbing the promotion ladder. We cannot be seen to be pulling up the drawbridge and preventing others from following in our steps. Women helped you, it is time to pay forward the groundbreaking work they have done.

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## **WOMEN HELPED YOU. IT IS TIME TO PAY FORWARD THE ASSISTANCE YOU RECEIVED**

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Women's Conference is traditionally full of laughs and tears, stories of triumph and stories that starkly remind us there is more to be done. But it is also traditionally a time where we stand up for each other and make the world a better place.

I hope you enjoy Conference and make the most of what you hear and see.

**Nicole Jess, President**



# FROM THE ACTING GENERAL SECRETARY

## **Only a union can work to achieve true equity in the workplace.**

Our Conference this year gives us the chance to discuss the many issues women face at the workplace, including equity: recognising that not everyone has the same circumstances.

Many of the issues we will cover will be familiar to attendees at previous conferences: wages are still not equal, leading to a superannuation imbalance; promotion still too often favours men; and sexual harassment and violence still blights our workplaces.

Only by working together can we make our workplaces equal for women. And the only way workers can truly work together is through their union.

As discussed later in this booklet, years of campaigning by the PSA CPSU NSW has yielded results: thousands of our school administrative and support staff, overwhelmingly women, will move from insecure roles to the security of a permanent, secure job, no longer at the mercy of enrolment numbers and being in the principal's good books.

This enormous win comes on the back of an earlier victory for this female-dominated sector, when the PSA CPSU NSW proved in a court of

law that their low wages were due to systemic discrimination towards a group of workers that is about 96 per cent women.

It is only the collective power of a union that can achieve wins such as these. Any employer can dismiss a lone worker's issue, but no employer can ignore tens of thousands of voices speaking as one. In addition, industrial justice does not come cheap. Unions have the financial clout to pay for expensive legal

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## **ONLY BY WORKING TOGETHER CAN WE MAKE OUR WORKPLACES EQUAL FOR WOMEN**

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challenges to unjust industrial issues such as gender-based underpayment.

This Conference gives women members an avenue to speak together and improve their working lives.

When you go back to your workplaces, let any non-members know the power of speaking as one. Let them know the power of being in a union.

**Troy Wright,**  
**Acting General Secretary**



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

## **Embrace Equity was the theme for this year's International Women's Day and is our theme for Conference.**

We all know equality means giving everyone the same resources and opportunities to achieve.

But equity is about understanding not everyone has the same starting point.

If we give the same resources and opportunities will the outcome be the same for each person? No.

Equity is more about an equal outcome rather than an equal starting point. For women unionists, it is a goal worth fighting for.

We know many of our fellow women members have to work that much harder to even achieve equality in the workplace. Different people have different circumstances.

Our employers need to take this systematic disadvantage into account.

The debate over the Voice has uncovered the incredible hurdles Aboriginal women face, not only in the workplace but in areas such as access to health and over-representation in the corrective system.

I think about how women in their 50s are the largest growing segment of homeless people in Australia. Access to the workplace is a pipe dream if the immediate issue you face is getting a permanent roof over your head.

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### **EQUITY IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING NOT EVERYBODY HAS THE SAME STARTING POINT**

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Women's Conference gives us the chance, as unionists, to address equity issues that bedevil so many of us. The collective intelligence of the women at Conference can work out how to combat issues such as homelessness and gender-based superannuation balances.

#### **Leanne Smith, Chair of Women's Council**





# OUR UNION WINS FOR WOMEN

## **Campaigning wins secure roles for PSA CPSU NSW members.**

For too long, thousands of support staff in the state's public schools lingered in a state of employment limbo, rolling onto insecure contracts year after year, often for more than a decade.

Overwhelmingly women, these workers had none of the security a full-time, permanent position brings. Access to a home loan or other form of credit is so much harder if someone cannot provide assurances they will have a permanent job the following year. Every year, as school draws to a close, the excitement of the holidays and summer is tempered with a lingering fear that a change in enrolments will mean no job is available the following year.

The PSA knows this situation was unfair on the female-dominated workforce that make our schools work efficiently.

A centrepiece of the PSA's Worth 100% campaign, our union for years pushed the then State Government and the Labor Opposition to drop this insidious overuse of insecure workers.

After years of falling on deaf ears,

the PSA's campaign finally caught the attention of not only the Labor Opposition, but also the Liberal National Government that had sat on its hands over this issue for nearly 12 years.

Members from the PSA CPSU NSW Executive, union staff and the Schools Departmental Committee suddenly had meetings with the Government and Opposition, both determined to win our members' votes in what was looking like a tight election.

Thanks to a strong union campaigning hard on their behalf, these essential workers who do so much for our schools were in the enviable position of being winners regardless of which candidate was grinning to the party faithful on election night.

The eventual winners, Premier Chris Minns and his Minister Prue Car, set about converting more than 6000 insecure roles into permanent positions, with promises of more to come.

These workers, overwhelmingly women, no longer work with the fear that their role will vanish the following year. They have better access to financial services and our schools are better placed with permanent employees less likely to leave, taking their knowledge and skills out the door.

The PSA CPSU NSW is not taking a break, though. In our TAFE campuses, universities and other workplaces, there are too many women in insecure roles. Your union will work hard to ensure the success we have had in our schools is replicated across the state.



# THE FIGHT FOR TRUE EQUITY

## **We need to recognise not everyone has the same opportunities.**

Not everyone comes to the workplace with the same backstory.

While equality means giving everyone the same resources or opportunities, equity goes the extra step by recognising that every individual is unique and may have had a more difficult pathway to the workplace.

Being equitable means accounting for varied circumstances and allocating the resources and opportunities each person needs to receive an equal outcome.

For many women, getting to a position many men take for granted means overcoming greater hurdles than their male colleagues.

For women from Aboriginal or non-English-speaking backgrounds, these hurdles can be even greater.

Without true equity, we will see the same issues facing us at work: fewer women in senior roles, a gender-based pay gap and lower superannuation balances. Without true equity we will continue to see sexual harassment and gender-based bullying at work.

Union campaigning is getting results and helping create more equitable workplaces throughout Australia and NSW.

Equity suffers when more women are prevented from access to the workplace due to their disproportionate role in caring for children. Measures to equalise access to paid parental leave, for example, will encourage more men to take caring responsibilities.

These are the steps taken by governments, under pressure from organisations such as unions, that can make our workplaces more equitable and our workforce a more accommodating place for women.

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## **GETTING AND KEEPING A JOB IS A STRUGGLE IF YOU ARE IN INSECURE HOUSING, SUCH AS A SHELTER OR COUCH-SURFING**

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True equity can be achieved with improvements to reproductive leave, recognising women employees have different health issues that need to be taken into account.

As Australia gears up to vote on the Voice to Parliament, we, as women, need to recognise the struggle for equity faced by our Aboriginal sisters. We need to maintain and expand the job identified roles which play a part

in giving First Nations workers a leg up into rewarding, Public Sector positions.

Pathways to work can be nearly impossible when there is an imbalance of opportunity to housing, particularly when women over the age of 50 are the fastest growing sector of the country's homeless population.

Getting and keeping a job is a struggle if you are in insecure housing, such as a shelter or couch-surfing with family and friends.

The country's housing crisis is a major impediment to equity, and all levels of government, from the Prime Minister to your local Councillor, have a role to play in addressing this.

Diverse workplaces are better workplaces that better deliver services.

Unions such as the PSA CPSU NSW are proud to play a role in this. We have been at the forefront of issues such as pay equity and domestic violence leave. These wins not only affect our members, they are adopted by other workplaces throughout the country. The wins that begin at Women's Conference today will affect the lives of millions of Australian women for generations to come.

No successful union sits back on its laurels. Women's Conference gives the PSA CPSU NSW the chance to continue the fight for equity in the workplace. It is a fight worth having.





## SPEAKERS



### **Sophie Cotsis, NSW Minister for Industrial Relations, and Work Health and Safety**

Formerly an Official with the Labor Council of NSW and subsequently the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Sophie Cotsis joined the Labor Party in 1993 and later became an adviser to then State Treasurer Michael Costa.

In September 2010 Cotsis was appointed to the Legislative Council to fill a casual vacancy. In September 2016, Cotsis resigned from the Upper House after she was preselected to contest the Legislative Assembly seat of Canterbury for the Labor Party.

She has been Minister for Industrial Relations and the Minister for Work Health and Safety since the election of the Minns Labor Government.



### **Rose Jackson, NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness and Water**

First appointed to the NSW Upper House in 2019, Rose Jackson was elevated to the Ministry after the election of Chris Minns as Premier in 2023.

In 2020, Ms Jackson called for an end to the private prison system in NSW and criticised past governments for going down the path of incarceration for profit.

After her involvement in student politics, she became President of Young Labor Left and a member of the Young Labor State Executive.



### **Sydney Colussi, Researcher, Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies, University of Sydney**

Sydney Colussi is part of a research team called the Body@Work Project, exploring labour laws and policies that accommodate reproductive health and employment.

Over the past five years, Ms Colussi has worked on legal and policy responses to the reproductive health needs of workers, including paid leave and flexible work options for fertility treatments and menopause, looking at whether these types of policies can help to support gender equality in the workplace.



**Annabelle Daniel OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Women's Community Shelters**

As Chief Executive of Women's Community Shelters, Annabelle Daniel OAM, has worked with local communities around NSW to establish and open shelters at Hornsby, Forster, Castle Hill, Penrith, South Penrith, Bayside, Parramatta and Revesby. She has also been instrumental in the ongoing success of the very first Women's Community Shelters facility, which opened in Manly in 2010. It is now known as Northern Beaches Women's Shelter.

She has collaborated with a range of organisations, individuals and stakeholders, from the community and all levels of government to achieve change in the field of homelessness for women and children.



**Jami Walk, Community Education Manager, Gidget Foundation Australia**

Jami Walk has been Community Education Manager at the Gidget Foundation Australia since July 2023.

A proud Wiradjuri woman born on Gaimariagal country, Jami has spent the past 10 years working in nursing across emergency, intensive care, general wards, and community health.

She also works as Clinical Nurse Specialist for Northern Sydney Local Health District Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service.

Jami has personal experience with post-natal depression and understands how easy social emotional wellbeing can decline after having a baby.

She is passionate about improving health outcomes and has deep awareness of providing a culturally safe space for her clients to engage in care.



**Sarah O'Brien, General Manager, Regulatory and Technical Services, Rest**

Sarah O'Brien is an executive with specialties in superannuation policy, regulation and governance, operations, technical and security, with in-depth knowledge of the financial services industry. She has particular expertise in the operational aspects of financial services and superannuation, and the design and implementation of regulatory change.

Sarah is passionate about good policy and the superannuation industry working with government and regulators to achieve the best outcomes for people in retirement, and for a fair and equitable system.

She is active in working groups and committees with industry bodies and government, including as a member of the Women in Super National Policy Committee.



## SPEAKERS



### **Karen Willis OAM, Gender Equity Officer, Unions NSW**

Prior to working at Unions NSW Karen worked for 40 years in non-government roles in sexual, domestic and family violence and harassment services. This included service delivery, policy, advocacy, and legislative work.

In 2005, with Professor Moira Carmody from the University of Western Sydney, Karen engaged in a three-year research project looking at the prevention of gendered violence.

Karen has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship, an Order of Australia Medal, and the Grand Stirrer Edna Ryan Award for her work to respond to and prevent violence and discrimination against women.



### **Jodie Harrison, NSW Minister for Women, Seniors and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

A former Mayor of Lake Macquarie, Jodie Harrison is now the member for the state seat of Charlestown.

Jodie was employed as a Recruitment Officer by the United Services Union from 2007 to 2011, where she was Women's Committee Coordinator. As part of this job Harrison was sent to the United States as part of an Australian Council of Trade Unions contingent to work with one of the major unions, the Service Employees International Union.

In 2011–12 Harrison worked for United Voice, previously known as the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, organising Early Childhood Educators and people in the care sector.



### **Liesl Tesch, State Member for Gosford, Former Paralympian**

Liesl Tesch became an incomplete paraplegic after a mountain bike accident at the age of 19.

She competed in her national wheelchair basketball team at five Paralympics, winning three medals, and was the first woman to play the sport professionally.

She took up sailing in 2010, winning gold medals at the 2012 London and 2016 Rio Paralympics with partner Daniel Fitzgibbon.

Since 2017, she has been the Labor Member for the state seat Gosford. Before this, she worked as a High School Teacher.



### **Lua Pellegrini, Artist**

A proud Wiradjuri woman and young carer who grew up on Darug country, Lua Pellegrini has an impressive portfolio of work and accomplishments to her name at the age of 21, including 2023 finalist for the NSW Young Woman of the Year Award and Chairperson of the NSW Youth Advisory Council from 2021-22.

Lua is a youth advocate and artist who has used her passion for art as a platform to uplift community. Lua, a 2019 HSC All-Rounder, was the recipient of the NESAs Chairperson's Award for the highest performing Aboriginal student in the 2019 HSC Aboriginal Studies course.

Lua gained fame for designing the 2022-2023 Sydney Swans' Marn Grook Guernsey Duguwaybul Yindyamangidyal, which means "altogether respectfully" in Wiradjuri.



### **Jean Kittson, Broadcaster and Author**

As a performer and scriptwriter for stage, television, radio, magazines and newspapers, Jean Kittson came to national attention on the ABC comedy program *The Big Gig*.

Well known for her comedy debates for the ABC, Channel 9 and Channel 10, she has been a regular columnist with a variety of magazines and newspapers.

She is the author of *Tongue Lashing* and her latest book *You're Still Hot to Me*.

Her film credits include *Hating Alison Ashley* and *The Nugget*.

Theatre performances include *Mum's the Word*, *Calendar Girls*, *Siren* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

She is a regular guest on ABC 702 radio drive program, *Thank God It's Friday*.



### **Christina Hey-Nguyen, Leader, Respect at Work Taskforce, SafeWork NSW**

Christina Hey-Nguyen's role is focused on addressing workplace gender-based harms including sexual harassment.

Prior to working with SafeWork NSW, Christina spent more than 15 years across corporate and government sectors as a diplomat, lawyer and human rights policy expert.

## SPEAKERS



**Jenny Leong, MP for  
Newtown, Greens  
Spokesperson for Women,  
Industrial Relations, Housing  
and Homelessness**

A former Crisis Coordinator and Campaign Organiser with Amnesty International, Jenny Leong has been the member for the state seat of Newtown since its inception in 2015.

Prior to entering parliament, Jenny was the Manager of Community Arts and Cultural Development at the Australia Council for the Arts.



**Erica Smits, Deputy Chair,  
PSA CPSU NSW Aboriginal  
Council**

Erica is a Gamilaroi/Euahlayi woman and is a member of the Yuwaalaraay/Euahlayi Native Title Group and the Gomeri Native Title Claimant Group.

Erica currently works at Aboriginal Affairs NSW as the Manager of Communication and Engagement within Aboriginal Culture Heritage. She previously worked for Create NSW as the Senior Manager of Aboriginal Strategy and Engagement, advocating and supporting Aboriginal art and culture.



**Shanice Leadbeatter,  
PSA CPSU NSW Aboriginal  
Council**

Shanice Leadbeatter is a Wiradjuri/Bundjalung woman who is an Aboriginal Community Engagement and Cultural Officer at the Department of Communities and Justice.

She has also worked in remote Indigenous Communities in our beautiful Country at Northern Territory Community Corrections.

Shanice prides herself on being a positive change agent and is passionate about Country, Culture, Mob, Traditions and Values.

She is a member of the PSA CPSU NSW Aboriginal Council, where she hopes to achieve cultural understanding, inclusion, and acknowledgement for her grandsons and for First Nations members of the union.



# PARTNERS

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