

# Common Cause.

January 2025



# TIME'S UP PAY UP!

**FIGHTING, GROWING, WINNING.**

**2024 YEAR IN  
REVIEW**



Mining &  
Energy  
Union



# OUR FOUR-YEAR PRIORITIES

**Our National Convention in late 2024 endorsed policies and strategic priorities to guide our work over the next four years.**

Our policies set out our broad approach to the short and long-term challenges we face. They cover topics from supporting mine approvals to work rights, global solidarity and lifting safety standards. They establish agreed national values and principles to guide our political, industrial and community activity in the years ahead.

Members can read our national policies at our website: [meu.org.au/research-policy](https://meu.org.au/research-policy).

Convention also endorsed a number of strategic directions aimed at building our capacity to grow and secure better workplace and political outcomes.

They include:

- More training for delegates to better represent members.
- Developing our strategic bargaining project to lift outcomes and industry standards.

- Finishing off the job of destroying the labour hire rort by using Same Job Same Pay laws to lift wages.
- Building our political influence at all levels.
- Continuously improving how we operate.
- Lifting national safety standards.

Convention delegates acknowledged the important workplace reforms introduced by Labor including Same Job Same Pay, removing barriers to collective bargaining and stronger rights for delegates and endorsed a resolution to ensure these reforms are not overturned.

In addition, Convention endorsed resolutions to work with the Net Zero Economy Authority to deliver transition support for energy workers and communities; dedicate resources to supporting approvals for mining projects and take action to prevent mining deaths including suicides.

National Convention only occurs every four years. 2024 was our best yet and I would like to thank all delegates to convention for their

participation and all our guests, staff and partners for making it a success.

Now, we are looking forward to pursuing our strategic directions and achieving the wins we will report on at our next National Convention in 2028. There's no time to waste!

**Grahame Kelly**  
General Secretary



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## MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL PRESIDENT

# GROWING AND WINNING

**Since gaining our independence as a standalone Mining and Energy Union at the end of 2023, we have gone from strength to strength.**

Membership has grown by over 2000 in our first year.

Our long campaign to stamp out the labour hire rort has seen Same Job Same Pay laws introduced, pay rises start to flow and permanent jobs increase.

Our advocacy for co-ordinated national support for power station workers and communities has seen the establishment of a new independent Authority with powers to redeploy displaced workers.

We've established a sturdy foothold in the Pilbara, formed a new Alliance to cover hard rock miners in western NSW and beefed up our national organising and training capacity to grow our numbers and skill up our delegates to represent them.

Around the country, members are standing together to win improved conditions in their workplaces and enforce them.

Workplace reforms introduced by the Albanese Government to get wages moving have not only delivered Same Job Same Pay, but also a wide range of improvements to bargaining and job security as well as beefing up rights for union delegates. These reforms help us even the playing field dealing with mining and energy employers, who are some of the most ruthless around.

I'm excited for 2025, to build on our growth and success of 2024. An important focus will be re-electing the Albanese Government and ensuring our important wins aren't wound back by a Dutton Government. We can't risk that.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities 2025 brings.

**Tony Maher**  
General President



## MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL VICE-PRESIDENT

# RAISING THE BAR ON SAFETY

**The best part of 2024 for me was the opportunity to travel the country from North to South and East to West visiting MEU worksites and talking to members about what's happening on the ground.**

I've seen a lot of diverse workplaces and welcomed the opportunity to head underground at multiple mines to see firsthand the challenges and difficult conditions – as well as the hard work and enthusiasm our members bring to their jobs.

Visiting workplaces and taking part in industry forums has really highlighted to me the different safety standards that apply between workplaces and jurisdictions.

Workplace and especially mine safety is governed by state legislation and regulation which varies significantly. But we also see big differences in approach between companies and management teams, and also between those workplaces with strong union density and without.

Building union density is a key ingredient in workplace safety because the backing of a strong union gives workers the confidence to speak up and speak out.

However we also need to ensure that safety gains in some parts of the country are matched in others – so that no-one is left behind.

An important focus for our Union in 2025 is to harness our considerable safety expertise at the national and district level to ensure we are sharing information, identifying and implementing safety best practice and empowering our members.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hundreds of people across our Union who put their hands up to represent their workmates as Site Safety and Health Representatives.

This is such a critical role that harks back to the earliest days of trade unionism in the coal industry. Workers knew that they couldn't rely on bosses alone to ensure their safety – they wanted elected workmates to speak up for them.

I've enjoyed meeting and learning from so many SSHRs during 2024 and look forward to meeting many more in 2025.

**Stephen Smyth**  
General Vice President





# TRAIN DRIVERS REBUILD UNION POWER IN THE PILBARA



**BHP iron ore drivers in the Pilbara secured substantially improved pay, bonuses and conditions after preparing to take the first strike action in the Pilbara iron ore industry for 15 years.**

After notifying of a 24-hour strike and a week of slow-downs in February, BHP came to the table with a package addressing many of drivers' key concerns including a 20% pay rise and guaranteed bonuses.

WA District President Greg Busson said that the agreement was industry leading, and bargaining representatives made the decision to subsequently withdraw planned industrial action set to commence that month.

The new agreement addresses key concerns of MEU members which include remuneration, rostering, flight allowance and other key conditions.

"Members should be incredibly proud of themselves for setting a new industry standard for workers in the Pilbara."

Secretary of the Pilbara Lodge, Hank Wiltschut, said that when he came into a leadership position, the lodge made density a top priority.

"We were able to build our density from around 40% to over 90% in around a twelve-

month period. Personally, I was talking to every single person I saw and asking them if they were in the union and talking to workers about why they should join."

Hank Wiltschut said that having regular meetings for members and regular communications following enterprise bargaining agreements also helped bring people into the fold and when the prospect of industrial action arose, members joined so that they would be able to take part if things reached that stage.

"I've had a heap of members reach out via text or phone at all hours saying that they're over the moon so we're very proud of what we have achieved and we're going to go back into the negotiations next time and build on our achievements."

97% of the affected train drivers voted to support the agreement.

Rio Tinto train drivers in the Pilbara also voted up a new Enterprise Agreement last year, winning 90% support. The MEU is pleased that the current EA provides strong improvements for members including the removal of performance-based pay reviews, guaranteed equitable percentage increases, better processes to resolve workplace issues, and more rights for Delegates. The gains were made at no expense of other conditions.

Rail organiser Warren Johncock said it was a big year for Pilbara drivers, who were in a good position to continue improving conditions. MEU membership in Pilbara rail exceeded 900 members in 2024.



## WESTERN MINEWORKERS TAMING THE 'WILD WEST'

**Bargaining has begun for the first collective agreement in over a decade for Pilbara iron ore production workers.**

The Western Mine Workers Alliance – a partnership of the MEU and AWU – launched a new bargaining campaign that promises to deliver the first Union agreement for iron ore production workers in the Pilbara in a decade.

The agreement will cover hundreds of production workers across BHP's Area C and South Flank, the largest iron ore hub in the world. Workers are seeking guaranteed annual pay rises as well as a greater roster flexibility and pay parity with other BHP workers.

While the WMWA has been building strength in the Pilbara, efforts to bargain with BHP were helped along by changes to industrial relations legislation introduced by the Albanese Government in the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Amendment. Under the

new laws, unions can trigger negotiations for a new agreement within five years of the existing deals nominal expiry date. The agreement covering production workers at South Flank and Area C expired in August of 2019.

This has allowed the WMWA to circumvent the Majority Support Determination process, which requires a majority of affected workers to vote in favour of bargaining. Thanks to these changes the Alliance is able to skip the red tape and get on with securing a better deal.

BHP is currently offering pay rises to most workers of between 2% and 3%. These rises fail to keep up with inflation, particularly for workers in remote or regional areas like the Pilbara.

Additionally, workers at Area C and South Flank are deeply concerned about BHP's proposed changes to rosters that would remove flexibility.

"Mineworkers in the Pilbara face many challenges in their working lives and bargaining is an opportunity to address them," said WA Secretary Greg Busson. "We urge all workers to get on board with identifying priorities and building their bargaining power."

The WMWA is now encouraging Rio Tinto to listen to their workers and come to the negotiating table in good faith.







## 'THE GREATEST INCREASE WE'VE EVER WON'

**Blast crews employed by Orica at Boggabri mine in NSW have voted up a new improved enterprise agreement which will deliver five-figure pay rises in the first year after growing union density on site.**

### **The new agreement includes:**

- **20 to 26% percentage increase in the first year, depending on classification**
- **Improved year on year increases in subsequent years**
- **Provision of total load allowance.**

Orica Delegate Trent Donoghue and Brad Gander were on the bargaining committee. Trent said that the new agreement would deliver pay rises depending on classification, bringing Orica shotfirers' conditions up to the top end of industry standards in the coal industry across Australia with all the provisions of the Black Coal Award.

"We've been advised that this is one of the greatest cumulative percentage increases that we've ever won, and members are incredibly pleased by what we have accomplished.

Trent said that negotiations were so fruitful due to building density on site, increased union activity and strong leadership from the union.

"On my crew for example we grew density from around 60% to over 90%.

"Our local Organiser Adam Lain was instrumental in highlighting to non-union

members the benefits of union membership and also the benefits of union density, especially with upcoming EA negotiations. Adam was able to achieve this over multiple site visits prior to and during negotiations.

Trent said that an important gain was the total load allowance which blast crews were previously excluded from.

"As blast crews we perform 'down the hole' functions, but we also perform work that spans all aspects of the explosives loading process. The work we do is also very physically demanding so to have that recognised through the total load allowance is very important.

"We've been able to achieve a lot working together. We really need to send a massive shout out to District Vice President Mick Taggart for his leadership and guidance on this matter. We would not have got this outcome without his support which was instrumental to our success."

Mick said that this win highlighted the importance of people coming together through the union to negotiate a better deal and that union involvement is key to workers improving their position.

## TAHMOOR CONTRACTORS ORGANISE AND WIN

**Tahmoor workers employed by RStar Mining went from being the lowest paid contractors in the South-West District to voting up a new enterprise agreement with higher pay and improved benefits, after organising their workforce from less than 25% membership to nearly 70%.**

Workers secured an initial 5.3% increase and two 4% anniversary date increases, overtime paid at double time, increased leave provisions and a \$2,500 sign on bonus, as well as other benefits.

South West District Secretary Andy Davey credits the new improved agreement due to members organising their workforce, particularly through the establishment of a Delegate Network on site and having an active bargaining committee.

"It was really important for us to get in front of workers at Tahmoor and be able to chat to them about the issues around the enterprise agreement, particularly around pay and their hourly rate.

"We began with around 80 members at the start of this round of enterprise bargaining and build up to around 220 members out of around 330 workers.

"Our Delegates were out there having conversations and building their contacts after each shift, and it was incredibly encouraging to see the number of members getting bigger each time."

Andy said that contractors far outweigh the permanent workforce by about three to one and it was a key objective to build solidarity among workers to secure a better deal and vote down substandard offers that the company may have tried to lock in with a divided workforce.

"RStar Mining proposed an enterprise agreement in 2023 which did not address many of our concerns around pay, but because we had built a strong presence on site, we were able to defeat that.

"Through being organised and having the density, we were able to communicate with the majority of the workforce about what the company was doing and stay united.

**"We are very proud of our members who stood strong together and secured this outcome."**

**100% of eligible workers voted 'yes' to the new agreement.**

# SUPPORT FOR POWER STATION WORKERS ON THE WAY

**Co-ordinated national support for power station workers is on the way with the official commencement of the Net Zero Economy Authority in December 2024.**

MEU General President Tony Maher has been appointed to the board of the Authority, which is tasked with supporting workers and communities affected by coal and gas-fired power station closures. Former President of the Fair Work Commission Iain Ross has been appointed as Chair.

The Authority currently has 120 staff and will work with unions, communities, state and local governments and industry to facilitate the development of new industries in traditional energy areas and co-ordinate redeployment for displaced power station workers.

Central to the Authority's work is the 'Energy Industry Jobs Plan' that places obligations on employers at closing power stations to support their workforce including retraining, engagement with potential future employers, and paid time off work for these activities. It also sets up pathways into new jobs through pooled redeployment schemes, with incentives for other local employers to hire displaced workers.

Tony Maher attended the NZEA's first board meeting in December. He said it was a positive meeting where there was a shared commitment to ensuring a bright future for energy regions and redeployment options for affected power station workers.

"We have been talking about the need for redeployment programs for power station workers for many years. This will now be a reality, with significant expertise and resources allocated to supporting power station workers into new employment."

"The establishment of the NZEA is an important milestone, facilitated by the commitment of the Albanese Government to ensure our energy transition leaves no-one behind. With multiple power station closures in the next five years, there's no time to waste in putting our plans in place."

The establishment of the NZEA followed years of campaigning by MEU energy members for co-ordinated national support throughout the energy transition.



**What does the NZEA mean for you?**

In recent years we have seen major coal closures, like Wallerawang, Hazelwood, and most recently Liddell. The closure timeline set by the public and private owners of Australia's coal generators will likely see all of Australia's coal-fired power stations close by 2040.

But what does this all mean for energy workers?

Workers at coal-fired power stations, and in dependent coal mines, are now covered by the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP), which has been established by the law.







## Step 1

The EIJP process is 'triggered' by the announcement of a closure by a coal- or gas-fired power station. This prompts the CEO of the Authority to commence a 'community of interest process.' The purpose of the process is to identify employers affected by the closure, beyond just the power station owner itself. This is to ensure that dependent coal mines and contractors are captured, and to identify other local employers that may be able and willing to offer suitable work to displaced workers.

This process must be done in consultation with relevant unions, and the MEU will be active and diligent in representing your interests and making sure that all employers are captured.

## Step 2

Once the 'community of interest process' is complete, the NZEA CEO applies to the Fair Work Commission for a 'community of interest determination.' Before making this determination, there is another opportunity for the union and workers to be heard by the Commission.

## Step 3

'Closing' and 'dependent' employers identified in the Fair Work Commission's determination now face obligations to provide support to affected workers. If covered by the determination, your employer must let

you know what their obligations are to you, and seek expressions of interest from you and your colleagues to participate in the EIJP. Whether you participate is completely up to you.

If you participate, your employer must support you to access career planning and financial advice, attend recruitment-related activities, and facilitate you to attend retraining courses (including by making a financial contribution). This includes paid time off for these activities. Your employer is obliged to engage with receiving employers with a view to facilitating worker redeployment, and must also allow you to get advice and support from your union as you navigate the EIJP process.

While the legislation creates these basic obligations, the specifics of the support to be provided is negotiated by the employer and the relevant unions. This gives us an opportunity to argue for support to be more generous than an employer might initially want to offer, and to get the details right so that the EIJP works for you.

## Step 4

If the unions and your employer agree on the supports, a joint application may be made to the Fair Work Commission for a determination that then requires the employer to provide the supports. There are penalties for employers who contravene the Commission's determination, once it's issued.

If unions and the employer don't agree on the supports to be offered to participating workers, any of them can apply to the Fair Work Commission to make a determination. In this circumstance, it's up to the Commission to assess the differing positions and deliver an outcome.

## Step 5

With the EIJP for your power station underway, the MEU will continue to work with you, your employer, and with the NZEA to make sure the legislation lives up to its objectives, issues are addressed, and improvements are made as we learn more about what works and what doesn't. The Authority and the EIJP are not 'set and forget' policies. They will require ongoing collaboration and commitment to strong outcomes for the energy workers and communities who have powered Australia for generations.

The first 'test' of the EIJP will be the closure of AGL's Torrens Island gas power station in South Australia, which we will be watching closely. The first coal power station set to come under the NZEA policy framework is Eraring, currently scheduled to close in August 2027.



# SAME JOB SAME PAY SWEEPI

**Our long campaign to stamp out the labour hire rort has seen Same Job Same Pay laws introduced, pay rises start to flow and permanent jobs increase.**

Thousands of labour hire mine workers have seen their pay packets increase by tens of thousands a year to match the rate as their directly employed workmates.

With more pay rises in the pipelines, here's a look at some key wins we've had in 2024.



## Mt Pleasant, NSW

Programmed labour hire mineworkers at the Hunter Valley's Mount Pleasant mine, including operator Danielle Todhunter, became the first direct beneficiaries of Same Job Same Pay laws.

In response to the MEU's Same Job Same Pay application to the Fair Work Commission, mine operator Thiess has offered Programmed workers direct employment, meaning they will get pay rises of over \$25,000 along with job security and conditions.

"We all do the same work, there's really no difference between someone who is wearing a Theiss label or a Programmed label in terms of what we do day to day.

"For all of us to now be on the same rate of pay and have the same conditions will be a game changer.

"The security of employment and improved conditions will impact many of my workmates.

The Union has been strong and focused and the workforce has been united behind this common goal. Contractors and permanents working together is how we got this win."



Danielle Todhunter,  
Mt Pleasant NSW



Nathan Hall-Riley,  
Boggabri NSW

## Boggabri, NSW

Around 50 One Key labour hire workers at Boggabri mine near Gunnedah, NSW received the first same Job Same Pay order in NSW, bringing their pay in line with direct employees.

In general, One Key employees received up to \$15,000 less than Boggabri employees a year.

One of our members, Nathan Hall-Riley, a labour hire Operator at Boggabri mine was one of the first NSW beneficiaries of Same Job Same Pay laws which came into effect on 1 November. He is now receiving an extra \$350 a fortnight.

Nathan told the MEU that when he got involved with the campaign for Same Job Same Pay it was to benefit his family, including his fiancée Brooke, three-year-old daughter Rhenn and two-year-old son Ryder.

In a further win, the pay gap at Boggabri was even bigger for workers on the lower-paid 'New to Industry' program.

Travis Herbert, a dump truck driver at Boggabri on the 'New to Industry' program is now receiving over an extra \$1,000 a fortnight under Same Job Same Pay.



Travis Herbert,  
Boggabri NSW



# NG THROUGH THE INDUSTRY



## Callide, QLD

**Hundreds of labour hire workers at Batchfire's Callide mine at Biloela in Central Queensland received a pay rise after the Fair Work Commission made the historic decision to issue the first order under new Same Job Same Pay laws on 1 July.**

The order covers almost 350 labour hire mine-workers employed by Workpac at Callide.

Workpac employees at Callide mine generally received about \$10,000 to \$20,000 less than Batchfire employees a year and the order closed the gap from 1 November 2024.

MEU member and Workpac production operator Josh Stevens was one of the workers who received a pay rise in November after being labour hire at Callide mine for six years.

"This pay rise will have a very strong impact, particularly since I've just started a family. I now have a daughter who is just two months old, and this pay rise will help go towards the essential things like housing, groceries, bills, nappies and baby clothes.

"At the mine, the majority of workers are labour hire, so that means hundreds of workers are likely to get a pay rise. This will be good for our community since it is a tight-knit community where we all know each other.

"I think more people will want to continue living in the local area if we are all treated fairly and being paid the same."

Greg 'Stricko'  
Strickland,  
Coppabella QLD



## Poitrel, QLD

Around 90 Workpac labour hire workers at Poitrel had their wages increased to the same rate as permanents with some members taking a whopping \$60,000 extra a year!

Based off the strength of the evidence the MEU submitted to the Fair Work Commission, Poitrel mine operator Stanmore declined to contest our application rather than delay the order being made. This allowed the labour hire workers at the site to be paid what they deserved, sooner.

## Coppabella, QLD

Dozens of labour hire workers at Coppabella mine in Central Queensland are on average \$15,000 a year better off thanks to the MEU's successful Same Job Same Pay application at the site.

After decades as an operator in the Bowen Basin coal industry and years as a labour hire contractor, Greg 'Stricko' Strickland and his workmates are celebrating the pay rises flowing from the orders at Coppabella.

He says despite their skills, experience and hard work, labour hire contractors weren't being valued the same for the same work. Now they are.

The extra pay and superannuation means Stricko can save more for retirement, visit his kids and grandkids more often, and enjoy his weeks off at his slice of paradise at Ball Bay near Mackay.

Stricko is a long-term MEU member who supported our Same Job Same Pay campaign and the application at his site and is now enjoying his well-deserved pay rise.

## German Creek, QLD

The Fair Work Commission has issued Same Job Same Pay orders covering labour hire coal miners working at German Creek open cut mine (Capcoal Surface Operations) in Central Queensland.

The orders cover labour hire workers employed by Workpac and Mobilise Group, with around 70 employees working for both labour hire companies at the mine which is owned by Anglo American.

The pay difference between labour hire workers and permanent employees at German Creek was up to \$55,000.

Workpac and Mobilise employees are now receiving the same pay as their directly employed workmates.

## Appin, NSW

The first Same Job Same Pay order in the Illawarra, as well as the first at an underground mine, means hundreds of labour hire mine workers at Appin Mine near Wollongong are now tens of thousands of dollars a year better off thanks to Same Job Same Pay.

Around 240 labour hire workers employed by PIMS woke up to a pay rise of \$15,000 - \$30,000 depending on classification, bringing them in line with the mine's direct employees.

## ONGOING APPLICATIONS

We have dozens of applications still in the pipeline, awaiting approval from the Fair Work Commission. These can be viewed at our Same Job Same Pay application tracker at [meu.org.au/tracksjsp](https://meu.org.au/tracksjsp)





## MEU WOMEN STAND STRONG

**A delegation of members and staff from across the MEU represented our union at 2024's Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) conference in Cairns.**

WIMDOI is a long-running event established by our long-time official Lorraine Usher, now retired, to give women an opportunity to share their experiences.

MEU women got to share experiences from the mining industry with 250 women from many different industries including firefighting, seafaring and maritime, rail, construction, meatworks, and electrical trades.

It was a good opportunity to consider how far women have progressed in the mining industry, and the improvements that we have already managed to achieve as union activists in our own mining workplaces.

Queensland organiser Sheryl Cooney said the conference was very empowering, looking at the challenges women have overcome to succeed and establish supportive networks for each other.

"It was enlightening to see where workplaces have been and where they are now due to the courage of women in male-dominated industries," said Sheryl.

"We also discussed what has changed in regards to legislation and how it was fought for by women. There is still a lot of work to be done in workplaces and with Government to create a safer stronger work force that includes women having a voice."

Clare Bailey, Mount Pleasant Lodge Secretary, said she came away with a view that the mining industry is a better place for women than many others, due to union organising.

"These conditions and concerns have been fought for and won by our predecessors and current union and safety advocates through Enterprise Agreements, union activists and health and safety advocates in our industry. However, there remains a collective responsibility to further enhance and uphold these standards.

"I left the conference with a heightened sense of motivation to champion the rights of workers, particularly women, and to serve as a positive role model for future generations of empowered union members."

Thank you to all the women who represented our Union at WIMDOI and congratulations to Clare Bailey and Logan Muller, from our Moura Lodge, on their recent election as Central Councillors.

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**TEAM SUPER**

TRANSPORT, ENERGY AND MINING



# ESOS TAKE ACTION FOR FAIR REDUNDANCY

**Emergency Services Officers (ESO's) working at Energy Australia's Yallourn power station, and employed by Programmed Maintenance Services, undertook indefinite industrial action for fair redundancy entitlements.**

ESO's continued to fulfil their obligations by responding to emergencies and ensuring they are meeting safety requirements. The industrial actions undertaken comprised bans on completing daily shift logs, bans on completing inventory checks, bans on completing debriefing forms, bans on refuelling vehicles, bans on cleaning vehicles, as well as bans on higher duties and overtime.

Victorian District Secretary Mark Richards said that with Yallourn scheduled to close in just four years, ESOs took action for fair redundancy entitlements.

"Currently, their entitlements are less than those of Yallourn mine and power station workers.

"That's not fair and doesn't live up to Energy Australia promises for a just transition.

"We believe that our ESO's deserve comparable redundancy entitlements to those they work alongside in the mine and power station, which is four weeks of each year of service paid for all years worked."

Mark Richards said that there had been a culture at Yallourn of workers organising through the Union to stand up for improved entitlements and a just transition.

"Yallourn mineworkers took action in 2022 and were successful in bringing redundancy provisions in line with power station workers. ESOs deserve the same."

In response to the industrial action, a bridging agreement with a duration of one year was reached. Through this deal, ESOs received an 8% pay rise and a \$7,500 signing bonus, without conceding their log of claims.

Negotiations over the remaining claims, including redundancy entitlements, are scheduled to recommence in April of this year.

**In response to the industrial action, a bridging agreement with a duration of one year was reached. Through this deal, ESOs received an 8% pay rise and a \$7,500 signing bonus, without conceding their log of claims.**



Yallourn ESOs



## POWER STATION WORKERS SUPER BACKPAY WIN

**Members at Victoria's Yallourn Power Station will be backpaid superannuation after the Fair Work Commission ruled in favour of the Mining and Energy Union application for members to receive their withheld payments.**

Approximately 70 workers are affected, with the accumulated underpayments totalling approximately \$57,000.

Victorian District Secretary Mark Richards said that this was a long running dispute.

"Members were not receiving their correct superannuation payments all the way back to 2020.

"While it is disappointing that Energy Australia fought us every step of the way, we are extremely pleased that the Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission ruled in our favour.

"I have spoken to members who say they are very relieved that this has now been resolved. At the end of the day, members just wanted to get what they were always entitled to."

The underpayments were uncovered after the Mining and Energy Union conducted an audit after a new payroll system was introduced in 2020.

Following the audit, the Mining and Energy Union lodged a case with the Fair Work Commission, with the Commission ultimately finding in favour of the Union.

Historically, Energy Australia failed to make superannuation contributions to employees concerning the ordinary hours not worked by employees when they take time off in lieu for the payment of overtime.

Energy Australia have now committed to depositing the withheld payments, with interest, into members' superannuation accounts.

**"While it is disappointing that Energy Australia fought us every step of the way, we are extremely pleased that the Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission ruled in our favour."**

# NATIONAL CONVENTION

**In October we held our National Convention, an event we hold every four years with delegates from around Australia to reflect on how we are going and set our path for the next four years.**

While BHP is digging in their heels for a fight over Same Job Same Pay, the peak of National Convention was delivering a message directly to BHP shareholders – all 500 of us plus the Northern District's wonderful pipe band.

## **Other highlights of our week in Brisbane included:**

- ✔ Celebrating the introduction of Same Job Same Pay with Prime Minister Albanese
- ✔ A rousing speech from ACTU Secretary Sally McManus on our successes since becoming an independent union
- ✔ Hearing from international guests from Japan, South Africa, the UK, the USA, New Zealand and IndustriALL about our shared challenges and struggles
- ✔ Discussing our national plan to raise safety standards across industries
- ✔ An inspirational presentation from former coal miner, safety advocate and Paralympian Brant 'Bugsy' North
- ✔ A look back at key disputes of the 90s, updates from Federal Parliament and much much more!







Check out the video  
for a taste of the rally!





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# MEU TEAM INVESTIGATES 'TERRIFYING' GROSVENOR EXPLOSION

**Grosvenor mine in Queensland was sealed indefinitely last year, following an underground explosion that left workers traumatised but physically unharmed.**



**In the early hours of 29 June, workers were evacuated after fire spread through the mine. All made it to safety but it was a traumatic event for workers, especially those who experienced the devastating underground explosion at the mine in May 2020, which seriously injured five men. Smoke billowed over the town of Moranbah for days until the fire was brought under control with the help of a GAG unit.**

Queensland District President Mitch Hughes said that the incident had been an extremely difficult period for the Grosvenor workforce. However, it was a relief that workers would have financial security through the redeployment to other Anglo American sites.

Grosvenor Lodge President Steve Hall said that they had been in constructive talks with Anglo American.

"We met with Anglo three times a week to discuss what happens next to the workforce, as well as the future of Grosvenor underground mine.

"We are pleased that talks were more constructive than they have been during past incidents, due to several factors but importantly because we have a strong Lodge in place now.

"In addition to mapping out a plan for workers' employment, what we were really looking at is ensuring the mental wellbeing of members.

"We're seeing a lot of people struggling psychologically, particularly those who have been involved in previous incidents.

"Recent events have been very triggering for workers who can't fathom how something like

this has happened again.

"We need to remember that this is the third incident in four years for some of these workers."

Meanwhile, the MEU has launched an industry-first investigation into this year's underground explosion at Grosvenor mine, bringing together union mine safety experts from around Australia and globally.

This is the first Union-led investigation that brings together experts from across jurisdictions.

Led by Queensland District ISHR Jason Hill and General Vice President Steve Smyth, the investigation seeks to understand how the explosion was able to take place, including which systems and procedures failed to prevent it.

Assisting in the investigation were Grosvenor SSHR Julian Barnsdale, South Western District ISHR Stephen Barrett and QLD District Policy and Admin Officer Annika Geraghty. They were joined by United Mine Workers of America Administrator for Health and Safety Josh Roberts, who provided the proceedings with an international perspective.

Throughout the investigation the MEU team analysed a mountain of documentary evidence and data, including gas monitoring data, ventilation readings, inspection reports, risk assessments, hazard management plans, SOPs and trigger action response plans.

The team also visited the surface of Grosvenor, inspecting surface infrastructure and gas drainage, and meeting with workers who were underground at the time of the event.

Additionally, the team examined a comparable longwall take-off and seals at the nearby Moranbah North mine.

Steve Smyth said it's important the Union gets to the bottom of what happened.

"The event itself had the potential for the catastrophic loss of life," he said.

"This investigation ensures that the MEU leaves no stone unturned in understanding why this explosion has occurred. We owe it to our members, their families and all underground miners."

Jason Hill said that while the MEU was experienced in investigating fatal and serious accidents, this was the most extensive investigation conducted by the MEU into a mine explosion.

He said the witnesses interviewed by the team gave great insight and detail into what must have been a terrifying event.

The seam mined by Grosvenor is the Goonyella Middle Seam, also mined by Moranbah North, Broadmeadow and North Goonyella mines which have also experienced explosions, fires and spontaneous combustion.

## Grosvenor Lodge President wins delegate of the year



The Queensland District awards night honoured Steve Hall, President of Grosvenor Lodge, with the Delegate of the Year award. It has been an unbelievably challenging year for the members of Grosvenor Lodge, but Steve has worked around the clock to ensure that they were supported and looked after.

**Steve Hall,  
Grosvenor Lodge  
President**





# SAFETY CHAMPION 'WOODDUCK' GONE TOO SOON

**In 2024 we lost our much-loved Queensland Check Inspector Stephen 'Woodduck' Woods who passed away after a battle with cancer.**

**Duck will be remembered for his passion to help others, his commitment to our Union and our members for thirty years, and for the friendship we were fortunate enough to share with him.**

Woodduck commenced his career in the mining industry at Cook Colliery UG mine as a fitter and turner apprentice. He then worked at Mount Isa mine, as part of one of the first intakes at North Goonyella UG coal mine where he joined our Union and became a Deputy.

Woodduck played an active role in the North Goonyella Lodge, serving members as President for two years, Vice-President for five years, as well as holding the role of SSHR at the mine for four years.

In 2012 he was elected to the role of ISHR (District Union Inspector) and he diligently served in that role until now.

Woodduck led from the front in fighting for workers' rights, and health and safety each and every day. He was a leading advocate in the fight for justice after the re-emergence of black lung was discovered in 2015, and his focus and commitment ensured that we delivered on what is now seen as worlds' best practice for health screening, prevention, dust monitoring, enforcement and rehabilitation.

Woodduck will be remembered for his warm smile, his humble nature, his absolute commitment to the health and safety of our members and his passion for helping others. We will honour his legacy by putting safety first every day.

**Our condolences go to Stephen's cherished wife Suzanne and their family.**



## Helping industry return their workers home, healthy and safe, every day.

In 2024, Coal Services continued to partner with industry for a safe workplace and a healthy workforce.



### Mines Rescue

Prepared **460** brigade members for emergency response and saw more than **27,000** attendances at training courses to manage risk and operate safely



### Coal Mines Insurance

Provided workers compensation cover for more than **40,000** workers and **2,370** employers to support injured workers through their recovery and return to work



### CS Health

More than **21,000** pre-placement and periodic health assessments were performed to monitor worker health and protect against occupational disease



### Regulation & Compliance

Statutory respirable and inhalable dust samples taken from the breathing zones of **3,520** workers

Data as at 31 December 2024





# FAREWELL TO LEGEND FRANK BAKER

Tribute by Steve Smyth, General Vice President

Along with many in our union and our Queensland coal mining communities, I was devastated to hear of the loss of Frank Baker last year.

Frank was a life member of the MEU in Queensland, receiving this honour in 2016 after proudly serving the Union as a rank and file member at its highest levels for over 30 years.

Frank's history in the miners' union started back in Collinsville in 1983 when he came to town as the rugby league coach. Back in those days the coach was the only outsider to get a job in the mine.

There he got to learn and share experiences about the strength in unions, hearing from the likes of Sugar Bunker, Errol Coffey and others who worked at the mine and were heavily involved in the football scene.

There is no doubt that his experiences in Collinsville working in a union mine helped guide him in the Union and being a union coal miner.

Frank was working at Gordonstone when the mine owners sacked the workforce and brought in scab labour. This resulted in a 22-month dispute, with Frank holding the picket line through much of that time.

Following the Gordonstone dispute, Frank also provided his voice to other ongoing picket lines and disputes right across Australia. His presence was always welcome, and I know that the members at those locations were always better for both meeting and listening to Frank.

In 2004, Frank was elected to the position of Central Councillor, the highest elected office for rank-and-file members of the Union. Frank was known for his thoughtful contributions and his willingness to represent the views of members. You could count on Frank to give the unvarnished opinion from the coalface even if it wasn't what leaders wanted to hear.



Frank was also very heavily involved in politics - helping those who had his trust, and he believed would make a difference. In my involvement with Frank, he could be the voice of reason or the voice everyone needed to stop and listen to. I will be ever indebted to Frank for his support and the loyalty he showed me.

He was the most humble, compassionate and toughest man I have ever met. He was a mentor and a leader of the highest order. He was a true working-class hero who always led from the front, never taking a backwards step and always being the first to offer his support.

As a kid growing up in Collinsville, he was my hero. Being able to work with him in later life made me understand what a true inspiration he was to us all.

The unions have lost a true legend of the movement, but I know his spirit and memories will live on in us all.



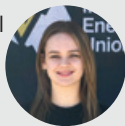


## MEET SOME OF OUR 2024 MINEWORKER TRUST SCHOLARSHIPS WINNERS!

### Violet Holland

**Bachelor of Paramedicine at Flinders University, SA**

Broken Hill local, Violet Holland is one of twenty successful applicants for 2024's Mining and Energy Union Mineworkers' Trust scholarship, which will assist her in her goal of becoming a paramedic as she completes her degree.



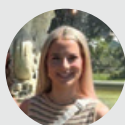
"I decided to go into paramedicine because I want to be able to get out into the community and have a different day every day, but mostly I want to be out there helping people.

"I've been so grateful to receive the scholarship since expenses for moving out of home has been significant."

### Brooke Adams

**Bachelor of Pharmacy at Monash University, VIC**

Brooke is an aspiring medical doctor who grew up in Central Queensland. Brooke moved to Melbourne when she was 17 to undertake a Bachelor of Pharmacy at Monash University, and she plans to continue study to become a Doctor of Medicine (MD).



Her mother is a proud member of German Creek Lodge, and her father is a proud member of the Aquila Lodge.

Brooke commented on how growing up in Central Queensland, she saw first-hand the inadequate health services in rural Australia, and she hopes to one day service the communities that she grew up in.

### Clancy Morgan

**Bachelor of Surgery at James Cook University, QLD**

Clancy said that one of the reasons she chose JCU was because they specialise in rural and remote medicine.

Clancy's father, Desmond is a Queensland District member from Collinsville and Clancy says she looks forward to one day working as a rural GP.



As part of Clancy's placement, she will be working in a rural facility for at least three years after she graduates, and she hopes to do her placement in the Bowen Basin which is where her family are from.

The Mineworkers Trust disburses millions of dollars to support vital services and organisations in mining communities. The scholarships have helped put hundreds of young students from mining and energy families through Universities and other Higher Education institutions over the years.



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## COLLIE'S UNDERGROUND MINERS CELEBRATE THEIR PAST

**Underground mining played an important role in Collie's coal industry from 1952 to 1994, when the last underground mines closed in favour of open cut mining.**

**To mark 30 years since the last underground mines in Collie – Western Collieries 6 and 7 mines – stopped operating, the MEU and Collie Retired Miners' Association organised a reunion so old workmates could get together and talk about old times.**

Two hundred people gathered at the Mine-workers Institute Hall on Saturday 25 May.

Retired Miners Association President Ron Guilfoyle worked underground for 16 years, before moving to the open cut when the underground mines closed.

Like many of the Collie miners, Ron was grateful to be able to continue his employment but preferred his years underground.

"I liked the comradeship," said Ron. "We worked as a team to manage the dangers and we had a good time at crib, playing euchre."

Frank Battista worked in Collie's underground mines for 30 years. "I do miss the comradeship," he said. "Those men are friends for life and many still live in the same town, that's the best part. The reunion is a real surprise. I thought once the underground was finished, no-one would be interested any more, it's a really great idea."

To coincide with the reunion, the Collie Art Gallery held a special exhibition of photos.

Back in 1994, Collie teacher and photography enthusiast John Bylund knew the impending closure of the remaining underground coal mines was a momentous event.

He asked the managers of Western Collieries' 6 and 7 mines if he could go underground to capture pit life in their final weeks of operation.

John's stunning collection of black and white photos sat at home mostly unviewed until – with the support of the MEU WA District – they were developed into a book and exhibition, both titled *Ghosts of the Underground*.

The photos depict mineworkers going about their jobs roof-bolting, operating continuous miners, navigating vehicles in tight underground spaces and playing cards at crib. The coal miners' camaraderie and hard work shines through.

Although the underground coal mines closed, coal mining continues in Collie at Premier Coal and Griffith Coal mines.

As Frank Battista said: "Collie coal mining has been a very faithful servant of the state for over 100 years and it's still serving the state."

**With further change on the horizon, the Collie community is doing a great job in remembering the town's proud history.**





# KEEPING OUR HISTORY ALIVE

**In 2024, the MEU produced a hard-cover coffee table book to showcase our rich collection of photographs. The book 'Sweat Strikes and Solidarity - our journey in pictures' celebrates our past as we embark on the next phase of our history as the independent Mining and Energy Union.**

The 170-page book contains hundreds of photos from the early 1900s through to today, under the themes: At Work, Campaigns, Communities, May Day, Safety, Memorials and Our Union.

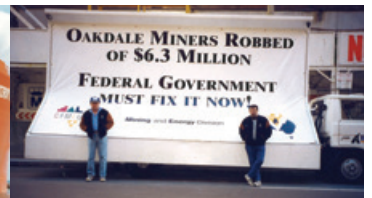
Anne Skinner, our long-term librarian and information officer, now retired, did a wonderful job locating and identifying many of the photos.

Sweat Strikes and Solidarity is just one of our projects to ensure that our proud history is recorded and never forgotten. In 2025, we will share more about our project with Yesterday Stories, producing mini-documentaries of key events and people.



Launching the book in our national office

The new book captures key moments from important disputes including Hunter Valley No 1, Weipa and Oakdale.



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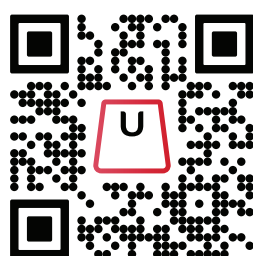
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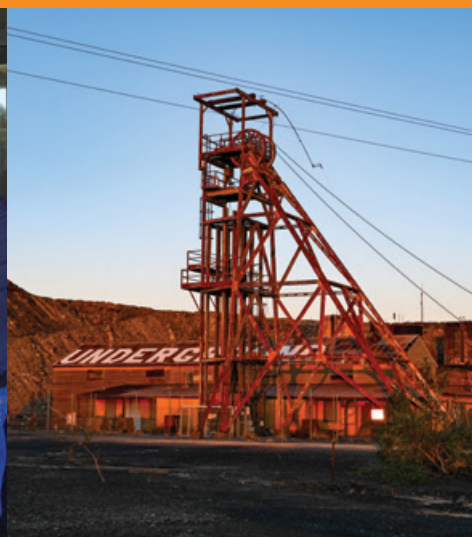
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## NEW ALLIANCE:

# 'DOUBLE THE RESOURCES AND DOUBLE THE MANPOWER'

**NSW hard rock miners like Daniel Cronin will have access to more resources and support with the launch of the NSW Mine Workers Alliance bringing together the MEU and AWU.**



**The new Alliance will represent workers in metalliferous mining in NSW and was launched at regional events in Cobar and Broken Hill in 2024.**

Daniel has worked in the mining industry for twelve years. For the last three years he has worked as a Bogger Operator at Peak Gold Mine.

Daniel lives in Cobar with his wife Chanae, and their four-year-old daughter Charlotte and two-year-old son Hudson.

"I think the Alliance is fantastic. I think bringing together two strong unions is only going to be to the further benefit of members. We've now got double the resources and double the manpower," Daniel said.

"At the end of the day unions are the last fight that we've actually got. For so long your Rio Tintos of the world have given workers the false sense that they don't need unions. They've said they've given us this or that, but over time they've taken all those things away.

"That's where the union movement in this country is something that we really need to protect and support.

"Precious metals like gold, silver and copper have always held great value. The future of metals is only growing, especially in uncertain global times, so it's only upwards from here."

The Alliance will fight for investment, good jobs and community services that NSW mining towns need to benefit from mining industries of the future and support the people who work currently in the industry.

"I like working in hard rock mining because I get to interact with lots of people, whether it's truck drivers, charge up or service crew.

"I get to see lots of people throughout my day, and there's lots of good people in this industry."

Members of both unions attended the launch events and had an opportunity to hear more about the Alliance from their local organisers and MEU and AWU officials who travelled up to western NSW to talk to members.

South Western District Secretary Andy Davey said it was fantastic to hear the interest and enthusiasm from members who are keen and ready to join the Alliance. He said the Alliance will fight to ensure western NSW mining hubs benefit from critical minerals and transition metals industries, with secure local jobs and thriving communities.

The MEU and AWU have members in mines from Broken Hill to Cobar and Orange to West Wyalong, producing gold, cobalt, copper, lead, zinc, nickel and silver. Existing members will have the opportunity to transfer membership to the NSWMA while new members will directly join the Alliance.

The NSW Mine Workers Alliance is the second alliance between the MEU and the AWU with the Western Mine Workers Alliance launched in the Pilbara in 2013, covering BHP and Rio Tinto mine workers.

**The Alliance officially began operating on 1 July 2024.**







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# BRINGING THE TRUE CONVICT STORY TO LIFE

**UNSHACKLED**  
THE TRUE CONVICT STORY

**Australia's convict history is one of the defining aspects of our national identity, but our popular understanding of convicts as a downtrodden criminal class obscures a dynamic and inspiring history of political agitation and collective action.**

**Unshackled: The True Convict Story is a new mobile exhibition which upends the prevailing narrative of an unruly-yet-apolitical convict class by revealing the power and solidarity of unfree convict workers collectively resisting the system. Sponsored by the Mining and Energy Union, it is the latest outcome of Conviction Politics, a digital history project which uses thousands of digitised convict records to reveal a struggle for political and workers' rights.**

Using the latest data-mapping technologies, Unshackled shows that from the earliest days of settlement Australia's first work force resisted exploitation through inventive solidarity in the face of maximum coercion and disempowerment. It reveals that approximately 4.5 billion hours of labour were stolen from the convict workforce between 1788 and 1870, literally building the foundations of the country on the backs of forced labour.

However, it also explores how the 160,000 convict workers fought back through strikes, sit downs, refusals to eat, sabotage, forming proto-unions, insubordination, escaping and rebellion. At its core, Unshackled is the labour movement's story, taking the origins of Australian unions all the way back to the involuntary arrival of an unfree workforce on the First Fleet.

Unshackled also tracks the thousands of political prisoners who were transported to the colonies in the hopes of neutralising

the threat they posed to the British social order. These included thousands of Irish independence activists, members of the pro-democracy Chartist movement and early trade unionists.

These political prisoners also fought back in their place of exile, spearheading rebellions like Castle Hill in 1804, becoming union leaders, crusading journalists, even government ministers.

Most political convicts were industrial and agricultural workers protesting their impoverishment by the encroachment of private enterprise onto previously common land, lack of rights in the new, industrialised workplace and dehumanising, de-skilling mechanisation. Many of the most militant were miners, especially coal miners, and they brought their militancy with them when transported.

The Jarrow Seven were coal miners and leaders of the United Colliers of Northumberland and Durham, an early British miners' union, who were transported to the Hunter Valley in 1832 following a strike that successfully reduced their working hours from 18 to 12. They were involved in a go-slow action in 1836, when the company they worked for attempted to remove the monetary incentives for work in favour of scrip which could be redeemed in local stores.

The Jarrow Seven were an important bridge between the unfree convict coal miners in the early days of the industry in Australia, and the free immigrant miners who gradu-

ally absorbed them over the 19th century. One member of the Seven, Issac Ecclestone, is credited with introducing a token system for payment of skips filled, which greatly increased fairness in the mines. When he became incapable of working, Ecclestone was paid a stipend of 12 shillings a week by James Fletcher, a key figure in the formation of our Union in the Hunter Valley, suggesting that Ecclestone played some role in influencing the formation of a coal miners' union.

Political and social democracy, let alone the trade union movement, were not given freely to the Australian colonies by a caring mother country, but had to be fought for by brave, principled and persecuted men and women, first in their home countries and then again as convicts.

These protestors, reformers, radicals and revolutionaries should be honoured and remembered for sacrificing their own liberty, and sometimes their lives, for the freedoms and rights we take for granted.

Following a successful run at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery – where the MEU participated in a successful Union Day providing union members with free presentations and guided tours of the exhibition – and a pop-up event at our National Convention, Unshackled will tour Australia, including regional coal hubs, through 2025 and 2026. In the meantime, hundreds of true stories, short documentaries, and other resources are available on the Conviction Politics online hub.







## 2024 was a big year for MEU members!

Since gaining our independence as a standalone Mining and Energy Union at the end of 2023, we have gone from strength to strength.

As well as our big, national wins like Same Job Same Pay laws and an Authority to support power station workers, MEU members have been out and about in the community running events, giving donations, educating members and supporting families.

Across the country, we have also welcomed thousands of new workers into our union.

There has never been a better time to join the Mining and Energy Union, so get involved and help us meet the challenges and seize the opportunities 2025 brings.



# JOIN US IN 2025

- ✓ HIGHER WAGES
- ✓ STRONG CONDITIONS
- ✓ SAFETY AT WORK
- ✓ SAME JOB SAME PAY

