



# Update

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN APRIL?

Lobby! Lobby! Lobby! is the campaign theme for the month of April, with delegations of ASU members and officials meeting with State politicians across Victoria to discuss the campaign and the need for increased government funding for better pay and conditions. Our experience to date has been that politicians are far more accountable when faced with passionate workers who live and work in their electorate with their community! To be part of a delegation to your local politician, contact your ASU Organiser or your local network.



### **Long Service Leave Portability Scheme at Risk!**

At a Portable Long Service Leave Reference group meeting held on March 25, it has emerged that **there is significant employer opposition to Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) Scheme, which will place its establishment in jeopardy.**

Members may recall that in 2008, the Victorian Government announced the allocation of \$1.2 million to the Department of Human Services to establish the scheme for the community sector in Victoria. This scheme is one of our four campaign priorities. Following the feasibility report and the actuarial report, the recommendations include that the scheme be established as prospective, compulsory and statutory.

The ASU is on a reference group to oversee the development of the scheme which was intended to begin from July 1, 2010, but if employer opposition continues, the ASU is concerned the scheme may not go ahead.

The ASU believes it is critical that the PLSL Scheme be implemented, as it will provide improved conditions of employment in a sector where benefits are significantly less than comparable sectors.

Union members have been campaigning for over seven years for the establishment of the scheme, but due to employer opposition, what seemed to be a victory, now could be a defeat.



### **Urgent call to action...**

If you have not already done so, every worker in your workplace needs to: send an email to your CEO today advising them that you support the PLSL scheme, and implore them to support it too!

Please forward this bulletin to all your colleagues and ensure they let your CEO know that there is unanimous support from your workforce for portable long service leave and urge them to express their support for the scheme with their peak organisation.

**The message needs to be LOUD and CLEAR.**





# Respect the Workers Sustain the Services

## Regional Round Up

### Ballarat Region

Following on from the Mass Meeting in October 2008, members of the Local Organising Network are planning to meet with local MPs in April to talk about the workforce crisis facing the sector. Then on Wednesday May 6, there will be a 'Shout Out' rally and march through Ballarat commencing at 12pm. Members are encouraged to put this in their diaries now! More details will be provided closer to the date. In the meantime, for more information on the campaign, contact Kim Delahey [kdelahey@cafs.org.au](mailto:kdelahey@cafs.org.au)

### Bendigo Region

Local workers turned out in droves for the campaign 'Shout Out' on March 26. The event got considerable media attention and was well attended by members from various workplaces. Local workers have also recently met with State MPs, Bob Cameron and Jacinta Allan to discuss the campaign and seek their support. A mass rally is now being organised for late May. For more information contact ASU members, Shaun [shaunrosaia@bchs.com.au](mailto:shaunrosaia@bchs.com.au) or Judy [judy@commander360.com](mailto:judy@commander360.com)

### Broadmeadows Region

Planning for next meeting and local events is underway. For more info, please contact Jake Argyll [jake@merri.org.au](mailto:jake@merri.org.au) or Luz Espinoza [luz.espinoza@anglicarevic.org.au](mailto:luz.espinoza@anglicarevic.org.au)

### Brunswick Metro

Local members are meeting with their State MPs in the next month to gain support for the Respect the Workers Sustain the Services campaign. Further rallies and shout outs are planned for May and June. For more information speak to local members, Pier [pier@hepcvic.org.au](mailto:pier@hepcvic.org.au) or Leo [sextonl@foundationhouse.org.au](mailto:sextonl@foundationhouse.org.au)

### Box Hill Metro

.There are no activities planned for the campaign for Box Hill currently, if you would like to be involved in getting this started, please contact Tash at [twark@asuvic.com](mailto:twark@asuvic.com) or 9342 3477.

### Craigieburn Metro

Please join in with the Broadmeadows area activities! Any queries, please contact Tash at [twark@asuvic.com](mailto:twark@asuvic.com) or (03) 9342 3477.

### Dandenong Metro

Coming up on May 8 will be a Shout Out at the Dandenong Market between 12.30 – 1pm. We need about 10 volunteers to hand out fliers about the campaign at the station. All participants who do not have a Respect t-shirt will be given one. For more information or to RSVP please contact Julie Kun on 9342 3480, [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com) or WAYSS delegate Dalene Salisbury on [dalenes@wayssltd.org.au](mailto:dalenes@wayssltd.org.au)

### Echuca Region

There are no activities planned in Echuca at the moment. To organise some campaign activities or for a workplace meeting contact Clancy Moore [cmoore@asuvic.com](mailto:cmoore@asuvic.com)

### Fitzroy Metro

.The Fitzroy group meets on a monthly basis at Neighbourhood Justice Centre, 241 Wellington St, Collingwood, to talk about the campaign and ways to raise awareness and activism in the area. Our last meeting was on Wednesday April 1. For our next meeting please contact Rosie Mullany, [rmullany@ysas.org.au](mailto:rmullany@ysas.org.au)

### Inner West/North West metro (formerly Footscray)

The Inner W/NW group held a short, very loud 'Shout Out' rally in Footscray Mall on Thursday, March 26! As a next step, the Local Organising Group is planning to meet with every government MP in the region to talk about the issues facing the sector. We are also planning a big rally on Wednesday, May 27, at 12pm, so put that date in your diaries now! More details related to this will be provided closer to the day. For more information or if you are interested in getting involved, contact Fran Ryan at [fran@carersvic.org.au](mailto:fran@carersvic.org.au) or Matilda Langley at [info@networkwest.net](mailto:info@networkwest.net)

### Geelong Region

Members in Geelong held a highly successful 'Shout Out' rally on Wednesday, March 18, where we made some noise and called on the State Government to commit to strategies that will fix the workforce problems in the sector. The following week, members came together again and handed out flyers to morning commuters at Geelong Station. Our next big event will be a rally on Wednesday, May 20 – details of the venue to be advised closer to the date, but put this one in your diaries now! In the meantime, the Local Organising Network meets on a regular basis after work at the Carrington Hotel. For more information, contact Joe Dejdar [jdejdar@barwonyouth.org.au](mailto:jdejdar@barwonyouth.org.au)

### Gippsland Region

After a successful SACS delegate training session, the following activities have been planned:  
**Morwell on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, 4.30 – 5.30pm.** Campaign update and informal get together of members and those interested in learning more about the ASU and the campaign. Drinks and nibbles will be provided. Address: 42 Buckley Street, Morwell. For more information or to RSVP please contact Julie Kun on 9342 3480, [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com) or Quantum delegate Shannon Dann on [shannon.dann@quantum.org.au](mailto:shannon.dann@quantum.org.au)  
**Bairnsdale on Thursday, April 30, 2009, 4.30 – 5.30.** Campaign update and informal get together of members and those interested in learning more about the ASU and the Campaign. Drinks and nibbles will be provided. Address will be provided in the near future. to RSVP please contact Julie Kun on 9342 3480 or [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com) or Quantum Delegate Val Marshall on [val.marshall@quantum.org.au](mailto:val.marshall@quantum.org.au)

### Inner Southern Region

The Local organising group met on April 1, 2009, where we celebrated the success of our South Yarra train station Shout Out and also planned for future activities. For more information on upcoming inner south campaign activities contact Julie Kun on 9342 3480 or [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com)

### Horsham Region

Members in the area have been talking about ways to build up awareness of the campaign and to build up union strength in the region. If you want to get involved, contact Wil Stracke [wstracke@asuvic.com](mailto:wstracke@asuvic.com) In the meantime, members are being encouraged to watch out for events in the Grampians at either Ballarat or Stawell/Ararat.

# Campaign regional round up. . .



## Lilydale Metro

Watch this space, or get in touch with Tash - a Lilydale event is being organised very soon! Please feel welcome to come along to Ringwood events. For more information contact Tash Wark on (03) 9342 3477 or at [twark@asuvic.com](mailto:twark@asuvic.com).

## Melbourne Metro

There will be a lunchtime campaign update with guest speaker Respect Campaign Coordinator Wil Stracke on Wednesday April 22, between 12.30 – 1.15pm at the ASU office, 116 Queensberry Street, Carlton. All welcome including members and those interested in learning more about the campaign and the ASU. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Julie Kun on 9342 3480 or [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com).

## Mildura Region

Local members are organising a training session for community sector workers on work/life balance for early May. The ASU is also conducting some student talks in May and would like to conduct some workplace meetings at the same time. To organise a workplace meeting contact ASU Organiser, Clancy [cmoore@asuvic.com](mailto:cmoore@asuvic.com) or to find out about local campaign activities contact ASU members, Chris Hobart [chobart@malleefamilycare.com.au](mailto:chobart@malleefamilycare.com.au) or

## Outer West Metro

For more information or to get involved with the local group, contact Helen Hoffman [h.hoffman@goodshepvic.org.au](mailto:h.hoffman@goodshepvic.org.au) Charmaine Chew [c.chew@goodshepvic.org.au](mailto:c.chew@goodshepvic.org.au)

## Peninsula Region

On April 23, there will be a Frankston region campaign update plus banner making lunchtime session. Come join the fun at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, The High Street Centre, 26 High Street, Frankston. Please bring your banner-making creativity. Then on Wednesday, May 13, between 12pm and 12.30pm, we will be at the Mornington Market for a Shout Out. We are looking for about 10 volunteers to hand out fliers about the campaign for just half an hour. All participants who do not have a

. Respect t-shirt will be given one. For more information or to RSVP please contact Julie Kun on 9342 3480 or [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com)

## Portland/Hamilton Region

There are currently no activities planned in Portland or Hamilton, but members are encouraged to watch for upcoming events in Warrnambool. If you would like to get involved in organising something specifically for this area, contact Wil Stracke [wstracke@asuvic.com](mailto:wstracke@asuvic.com)

## Preston Metro

A mass rally is planned for May 6 outside Northcote MP, Fiona Richardson's Office. For more information about the local network or campaign activities contact local members Adam [adambottomley@hotmail.com](mailto:adambottomley@hotmail.com) or Sue [suem@nehs.org.au](mailto:suem@nehs.org.au)

## Richmond Metro

Please join in with the Fitzroy area activities! Any queries, please contact Tash at [twark@asuvic.com](mailto:twark@asuvic.com) or 9342 3477.

## Ringwood Metro

A well attended 'Paying Respect' BBQ was held Monday March 16, also at EACH. Members and delegates from the local area spoke about why the campaign is important to them and were joined by Lisa Darmanin. Delegates are following up by meeting with local MPs, lobbying for increased funding for the community sector. The next Ringwood LOC meeting is at 1pm on Monday April 6, at EACH, 46 Warrandyte Rd, Ringwood. For more info please contact Cherie Marian [cheriem@edvos.org.au](mailto:cheriem@edvos.org.au)

## Seymour Region

.More info about the Seymour network is available from Pam Lawler on [pam.lawler@aus.salvationarmy.org](mailto:pam.lawler@aus.salvationarmy.org)

## Shepparton Region

The Shepparton Local Group is planning their next meetings and events, so for more information contact Tash on [twark@asuvic.com](mailto:twark@asuvic.com) or 9342 3477

## Stawell/Ararat Region

Members are planning a local event in the coming months. In the meantime,

members in the region are being encouraged to make sure they are available to attend the upcoming campaign rally in Ballarat on Wednesday, May 6. For more information or to get involved in the campaign in the Grampians region, contact Veronica Pascall [veronica.p@gchc.org.au](mailto:veronica.p@gchc.org.au) or Jeanine Jones [jeanine.j@gchc.org.au](mailto:jeanine.j@gchc.org.au)

## Sunbury/Kyneton Region

Local members had a successful breakfast at Caddies Café in Kyneton on April 2 to renew their commitment to the Respect the Workers, Sustain the Services campaign in the area. To find out more about future campaign activities or to book in a workplace meeting, contact Clancy Moore [cmoore@asuvic.com](mailto:cmoore@asuvic.com)

## Swan Hill Region

There are no campaign activities planned in Swan Hill at the moment. To organise some activities or to arrange for a workplace meeting contact Clancy Moore [cmoore@asuvic.com](mailto:cmoore@asuvic.com)

## Wangaratta Region

There are no activities planned for the campaign for Wangaratta currently, so if you would like to be involved in getting this started, please contact Tash at [twark@asuvic.com](mailto:twark@asuvic.com) or 9342 3477.

## Warrnambool Region

Members will take to the street and march through Warrnambool on Tuesday, April 28. We will assemble at 12pm at a central point and then march to the Civic Green, where we will 'Shout Out' in support of the campaign. The Local Organising Network meets regularly so for more information or to get involved, contact Gary Lucas [glucas@comconnect.com.au](mailto:glucas@comconnect.com.au)

## Wodonga Region

Wodonga meetings happen regularly, held at Uniting Care, Cnr of Beechworth Rd & Nilmore Ave, Wodonga. We hope to see you there! For more info, please contact Andy Martin [andrewmartin@chss.net.au](mailto:andrewmartin@chss.net.au) or Rebecca Eberle [reberle@umfc.com.au](mailto:reberle@umfc.com.au)



## Shouting Out!

This month, many regions started holding 'Shout Outs', where members make some noise at a prominent place like a shopping mall or a train station while handing out flyers to the public about the campaign. A 'Shout Out' is easy to organise and takes as little as half an hour but it can make a big impact.

'Shout Outs' have already happened in Geelong, Bendigo and Footscray outside local major shopping centres. In Geelong, ASU members came together, wore their 'Respect' t-shirts, chanted, handed out flyers with information about the campaign, talked to members of the public and collected signatures for the petitions. The next day, the Geelong Advertiser reported that 'more than 70 employees from community based services took their message to the streets'.

Geelong Local Organising Group member Chris Couzens says: 'The cost on the community when services face collapse needs to be brought home to government. So we were really pleased that so many workers came along to show their support for the campaign and we were also happy that we had such a great response from the public. This is how we can make real change!'

**And Fiona Lorimer, another local activist, was inspired to write a poem:**

## Rally on Geelong!

The mass of ASU, Red Activist's,  
Rolled up amongst the crowd,  
Communities surprised reaction  
A Rally here in town!

Geelong's Non Gov't frustrated Workers,  
100 of us strong,  
Yelled "Parity" not "Charity"  
Wil rallied the chant along.

A proud moment in time to  
remember....  
Before the front of the wage war  
begins,  
"Save Our Services" ACTION!

**Together....We shall WIN!**

## Focus on wages

### Did you know that.....

- You and your colleagues across 'not for profit' services earn on average \$15,000 below the average Australian wage?
- You and your colleagues in 'not for profits' earn much less than you would if working in the public sector? So, for example, the difference in what a newly qualified social worker can earn at entry point level in the SACS sector as opposed to a hospital is more than \$100 per week and for DHS is more than \$140 per week. That gap widens to be more than \$600 per week as you move up.
- In Queensland, a new pay scale has been developed that is likely to set pay rates of between \$40,000 at graduate entry point level up to around \$80,000 at the top levels? Equivalent Victorian pay rates are currently \$34,000 to \$54,000.

### So how did we end up so far behind?

The most common misconception is that the problem lies with your Award. In fact, rates of pay under your Awards are fairly much in line with Award rates in other sectors and industries.

The problem is that since the 1990s, improvements to wages and conditions have been negotiated by everyone else by way of Enterprise Bargaining Agreements. So workers like you, with valuable skills and qualifications, have negotiated wages that are much higher than their respective Award minimum rates.

In fact, the 'not for profit' community sector has remained one of the only sectors where the great majority of employers do not negotiate rates of pay and conditions with their workers, but continue to pay their workers Award minimum rates. And those EBAs that have been negotiated provide for wages that are generally not much higher than the Award.

Your employers say that this is because their funding is benchmarked against the Award, meaning that their hands are tied when it comes to negotiating improvements at a workplace level. On the other hand, the State Government says that they provide yearly funding increases to every agency with an expectation that these will be passed onto you - but without any requirement that they do so.

### So what do we need to do?

Clearly, employers are telling us that we need to convince the government to improve funding for your wages, while the government is telling us that we need to get employers to commit to passing funding on.

*Continued.....*

## What does that mean?

We know from other successful campaigns that getting government to listen means making lots of noise! So that means putting our all efforts into the various campaign events planned for the first half of this year – it makes sense that if you make the time to come along and add your voice to a rally, meeting with an MP or a Mass Meeting, then we all get louder and the people in government who make decisions about funding find it harder to ignore you.

However, we also know from other successful campaigns that sometimes this type of political lobbying is not enough. Sometimes governments and employers need more to be convinced - even when a problem becomes so significant that a sector faces imminent collapse and when the solution is so obvious. Nurses, teachers, health professionals, ambulance officers – there is a long list of caring professionals who have had to do more than just lobby to get everyone to the table to negotiate realistic and fair funding levels for workers' wages and conditions.

And upping the ante has sometimes meant that workers have had to exert industrial pressure as well as political pressure in order to achieve their aims.

**Here are some important facts you need to know.**

**1. Industrial pressure is a tactic that is completely legal and has been used by workers in lots of industries to achieve improvements to wages and conditions.**

In fact, the SACS sector is one of the only industries where this is not common. Mind you, when ASU members have taken action, they have been very successful. ASU members in Community Health Centres took industrial action in 2002 and achieved significant pay increases as a result. In other sectors, nurses and teachers have been using their industrial strength for over twenty years and the recognition of their professional status in rates of pay is directly related to their industrial approach.

**2. Industrial pressure tactics take lots of different forms.**

They run the gamut from workers all wearing badges or t-shirts at work, or saying they will not do overtime or record statistical data, all the way to participating in stop work meetings and even ...

sometimes going on strike. It is important that you know that if you and the other ASU members at your workplace decide to be part of this process, then this does **not** mean that the union office or union officials will be telling you what to do.

There are various steps in any legal industrial process that mean that every member has a say in what happens at their particular workplace and each step will be debated by members **at that workplace.**

**3. People DO care about the work that you do and WILL care if you decide to take action.**

The union office asked an independent company to do some focus group research with members of the community to find out what they knew about the work that you do and how important they think that it is. This research told us that the broader community believes that what you do is very important. The only thing they did not know was that services are mainly reliant on government funding. When told that, they immediately made the connection – poor government funding means poor wages, poor wages mean workers leaving the sector, workers leaving the sector means services are unsustainable in the long run, services collapsing means they, their children and their community are at risk.

**4. Because of our laws, industrial pressure tactics need to happen on a workplace by workplace basis.**

That means the union negotiating with each employer separately in relation to wages and conditions. However, this does not mean we cannot try to achieve very similar outcomes at similar times across the sector in those negotiations.

**5. Because of our laws, only union members will be protected when they participate in this process.**

So if there are people in your team or agency who agree that poor wages and conditions are putting the sector at risk of being unable to deliver services to our community, you should talk to them about the importance of joining the union.

After all, it is ASU members who are running and resourcing this campaign, it will be ASU members who participate in any action and it will be ASU members who have the final say about what happens at each workplace.

**So what should we be trying to achieve in workplace negotiations?**

ASU members say that reasonable outcomes in any workplace negotiations should take into account what you could earn if you were doing the same or similar work in the health or government sector.

## Community Health Centres (CHC's) Update...

Members in Community Health will be aware that negotiations for a new Community Health Agreement have stalled before they even really began. Employer rep VHIA has advised us that the Victorian Government has changed their approach from previous negotiations, meaning that any offer that we may get is going to be much less than the claims previously endorsed by members.

Given this, we are about to hold a round of meetings at each CHC to get feedback about what members want to do. One option proposed by Delegates attending negotiations has been for members at each CHC to look at their previous claim and decide whether they want to amend this and come on board the 'Respect' process outlined in this update.

To arrange a meeting at your CHC, contact the ASU Member Contact Centre on 1300 85 55 70.

## Housing Update...

During March the Council of Homelessness Persons and Domestic Violence Victoria both signed the campaign statement of support. This is a great example of peak bodies and union members agreeing and working together on common goals such as decent wages and conditions for workers and a sustainable and thriving community sector.

If your organisation has not signed the statement it might be because nobody has actually asked them to. So now is the perfect time to ask your CEO or Manager the question: "Has our organisation signed the statement of support?" And if the answer is 'no' then go ahead and ask them to join dozens of other organisations and peaks large and small that have come on board and signed up. For more information regarding the campaign statement of support, contact the ASU Member Contact Centre on 1300 85 55 70 or [info@asuvic.com](mailto:info@asuvic.com).

## Community Legal Centres (CLC's) update...

Using the information provided in the ASU CLC workplace survey, the CLC ASU negotiation committee has determined that wage parity and classification structures are the two biggest issues confronting workers in CLCs. If you work in a CLC and want a better classification structure, wage parity, and improvements to conditions such as OH&S and paid parental leave, then get in touch with our office to arrange an ASU meeting for your workplace to discuss and endorse the Log of Claims. A log containing core matters including pay parity has already been prepared, so if your workplace does not have a meeting planned, contact your local ASU campaign Organiser or ASU Organiser Julie Kun on (03) 9342 3480 or [jkun@asuvic.com](mailto:jkun@asuvic.com)

## Salvation Army Members Get Active...

The Salvation Army Working Group has been meeting regularly at the ASU offices since late 2008. Sick of poor pay, issues with THQ, and inequities throughout the agency, the group has formed with the aim of galvanising and unionising workers at the Salvation Army to improve pay and conditions across all Salvation Army sites. To date the group has done an extensive survey of Salvation Army workers, developed a Log of Claims and started to recruit new members. To be part of this group contact ASU Organiser, Clancy Moore at [cmoore@asuvic.com](mailto:cmoore@asuvic.com)

## Members Tips

*Tips provided by ASU Delegate, Adam Bottomley who is a Mental Health Worker at MIND.*

### USE UNION HISTORY TO INSPIRE

Many people think we can't change anything, so why try? Activists can counter this by telling workmates about some of the history of trade union campaign victories. Building big and active unions is how most progressive change has happened in Australia, so knowing a few of the stories can show people that actually, when we organize and fight, we win. Learn some of this inspiring history yourself on Vic Trades Hall or other unions' websites. Ask around other ASU unionists and delegates, call the ASU office for some tips, listen to some union radio, visit a left-wing or union book shop, or find some documentaries about union campaigns and offer them around.

### RELATE UNIONS TO PROGRESSIVE ISSUES

Find out which progressive issues your workmates care about and then find out what actions the ASU or other unions have taken on that matter. Show people that unions have lent weight to any number of social movements, often helping them win – whether it's the Aboriginal Land Rights movement, environment or gay rights movements, anti-war campaigns or anti-uranium mining movements. If your workmate is passionate about social issues, they should join the union and help it to get involved in supporting campaigns.

### USE NEWSPAPERS TO START PEOPLE TALKING

Follow what's happening in the local papers and read them at your desk or around the tearoom so that you can invite other people into discussions around events. Papers usually have a few stories about underfunded social services in Melbourne. Occasionally you'll even find a story about workers speaking out or organising against cuts – great! Start a conversation about that. These issues are relevant to workers in SACS and political! Breaking down taboos in your workplace about talking about union issues or politics is a huge victory.