

# Union News



Members' Newsletter | March 2011



## Prepare for landing... Qantas Delegates to consider EBA deal

After more than 8 months of negotiations the ASU have made a breakthrough in negotiations with Qantas.

The ASU National Negotiating Team met with Qantas last week and reported productive talks regarding EBA9. Delegates to the ASU NNT believe they have negotiated a settlement they can recommend to a meeting of Qantas Delegates on 31 March. At that meeting, delegates will make their recommendations to members about the EBA.

The ASU has cancelled the proposed industrial action ballot that was due to commence at Melbourne Airport this week while ASU Qantas delegates consider the EBA9 proposal.








### Dates for your diary

Please take note of the following training date for delegates and members:

-  Fair Work Act  
May 18
-  Advanced Delegates  
June 22-23
-  Advanced Refresher  
August 24
-  (Intro) Unionwise  
September 7-8
-  Campaigning for delegates  
October 19-20.

### Occupational Health and Safety Training

- |  |   |
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|  Initial 5-day (Carlton)<br>April 4-6, 14-15<br>May 2-6                         |  Comcare<br>May 9-13   |
|  Initial 5-Day<br>Geelong: April 11-15<br>Ballarat May 2-6<br>Bendigo May 16-20 |  2-Day (Carlton)<br>April 11-12  |
|  |  1-Day General Update Refresher<br>Frankston, Bendigo April 18<br>Carlton April 19, May 16 |



# Message from Branch Secretary Ingrid Stitt

2011 is shaping up as a huge year for ASU members. We are bargaining hard for wage increases and improvements to working conditions across a range of industries.

I am confident that through sticking together and running smart campaigns on the ground, ASU members will make real gains this year.

ASU Delegates across Qantas will meet on 31st March in Melbourne to consider a settlement reached with the company last week. This follows over 9 months of negotiations.

The Qantas Delegates meeting on 31st March will determine a recommendation to ASU members at Qantas. Our members in Qantas Holidays will also be considering a proposed settlement soon.

Our bargaining in airlines is also heating up in Jetstar, Menzies, Emirates and AaE.

There is also a considerable amount of bargaining going on in other sectors, such as cash transport. At Armaguard, members have endorsed a ballot for Industrial Action.

In other campaign news the ASU has called on governments at both state and federal levels to get behind call centre workers and take meaningful steps to stop the flood of jobs off-shore. This call follows the announcement of almost 1000 job losses this month in local contract call centres providing service to Telstra customers.

This is not a new call for action. In 2006 the ASU teamed up with other call centre unions and commissioned research into the off-shoring of work in this sector. The research clearly showed that there was a massive economic benefit if we got behind keeping jobs in Australia. See our article on the next page for further information about how you can support Australian call centre jobs of the future.

Finally I'd like to invite you to join an ASU contingent at the Rally for Marriage Equality.

The Victorian ASU has a proud tradition of supporting equal rights for all members of our community, and of standing in solidarity with people disadvantaged by unfair laws. It is so important that we end marriage discrimination in this country, and acknowledge all forms of love as equal before the law.

ASU members and supporters are invited to join our contingent at the State Library this Saturday (details below).

Our organisers hope to see you there.

In Unity

Ingrid Stitt  
Branch Secretary



## UNION NEWS IN BRIEF

In Focus: Off-shoring Contact Centres

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*Target admin and clerical win pay rise*

*FCU turns 100*

*NEC workers win payout of sick leave, 4%*

*Anne Morrison receives life membership*

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## GET ACTIVE



### Rally for Marriage Equality

The ASU invites supporters to join an ASU contingent at the Rally for Marriage Equality this Saturday 26th March at 1pm at the State Library of Victoria.

ASU members and supporters are invited to meet under the statue of Redmond Barry directly in front of the State Library, to join organisers and staff in a proud display of our union's solidarity with the equal marriage rights movement. Members are also encouraged to wear ASU t-shirts or colours where possible. See [www.asuvic.org](http://www.asuvic.org) for details.



## IN FOCUS: KEEPING CONTACT CENTRE JOBS IN AUSTRALIA

The ASU has renewed its call for a comprehensive industry plan to secure future employment and prevent off-shoring following the loss of 992 contact-centre jobs.

The job losses were due to Telstra's decision not to renew contracts with two of its Australian based contact call centres, Salmat and Vertex. Some of these jobs may be permanently lost from Australian shores; Telstra has indicated that Philippine companies are

still being considered for the tender. Branch Secretary Ingrid Stitt called upon State and Federal Governments to "look to the future of the Australian workforce. Governments must play their part in assisting the ICT industry to build skills and capacity for Australian workers, to save Australian jobs in this highly competitive sector".

The ASU has also stressed the benefits to industry and consumers in retaining call centres in Australia. "The loss in productivity and coordination, issues around data security, and consumer concern over labour market standards; these should all be carefully considered by companies trying to save a few bucks by sending jobs overseas" warned Ingrid.

Industry research, including the union's own, all indicates that off-shored contact centres are frequently associated with a reduction in service levels and quality.

Consumers are also citing ethical concerns about Australian companies exploiting the lower wages and working conditions experienced by workers in developing countries. (see panel).

The ASU has written to

the relevant state Minister, and has been in contact with Vertex and Salmat to negotiate conditions for the workers who were made redundant.

Contact Centre Organiser Gail Drummond reported that Vertex had been quite responsive to ASU's enquiries and was making efforts to minimise redundancies and source new contracts.

For Vertex's workers, the loss of the contracts and the news of redundancies has provided added incentive to organise.

Gail says that while workers are devastated by the news, they're taking the right approach. "We're seeing a lot of new members coming to the ASU to learn about their rights and how the union can act on their behalf."

"They know that they're going to have to work together to keep these jobs in Australia".

### International Roaming - what's the global cost of off-shore contact centres?

The 'improved efficiency' cited by management in moving call centre work offshore often amounts to exploitation of workers in developing countries.

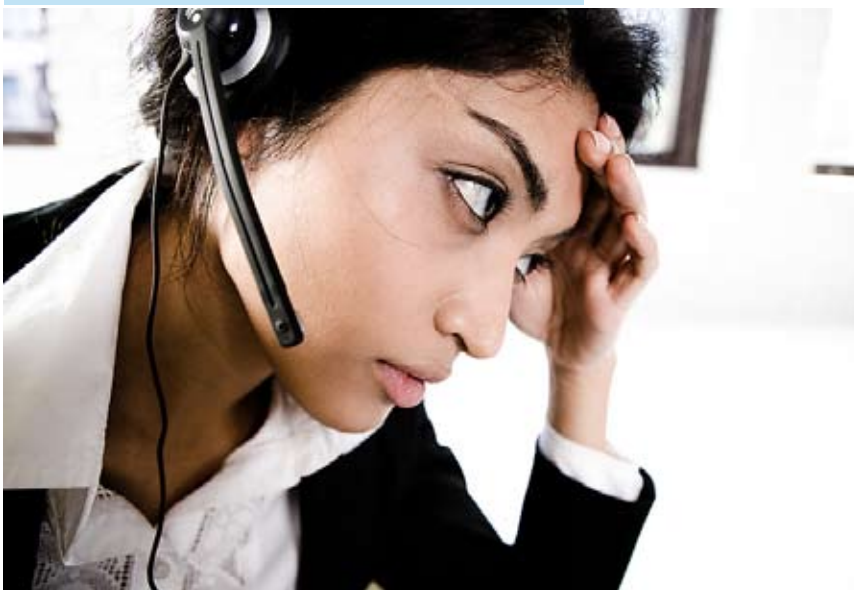
Due to high unemployment and low unionisation, workers are forced to accept wages around one-tenth of what a western worker would earn for the same job, and may have quotas of up to 400 calls a day compared to an average of 80 for an Australian worker.

There are also serious issues around loss of cultural identity due to the nature of call centre work. Workers may be forced to adopt western names in order to create the false impression that they are located in Australia, and are often given even less control over decisions and processes than Australian workers.

Unions are therefore concerned that profit-driven offshoring exercises may be creating 'sweatshops' in developing countries.

### The hidden cost of off-shoring

- Over 65% of surveyed consumers indicated they would decrease or discontinue purchasing from a company that off-shores its contact centre operations
- Customers' personal information may not be safe in the countries where jobs are being sent due to lax data security
- Off-shore operations can increase coordination difficulties and thereby decrease the efficiency of onshore staff. Customer service ultimately suffers.
- The practice of off-shoring has been shown to lead to staff morale problems and increase job-security fears amongst remaining staff
- Off-shoring inhibits the development of skills in the Australian workforce and makes Australia less competitive



## UNION NOTES

- Target administration and clerical workers in Geelong have won a substantially improved offer after taking Industrial Action. Target originally offered a pay increase of \$9.50 per week, down from an average of \$24 per week paid over the previous three years. Through the collective action of ASU members, Target adjusted their offer to \$27 per week for each of the next three years. The new agreement is to be voted on next week
- The Federated Clerks Union, predecessor to ASU's Victorian Private Sector Branch, turns 100 this year. A small celebration for delegates is planned for later in the year



- After 12 months of bargaining, NEC workers approved a new agreement securing payout of sick leave and a 4% pay increase backpaid to April. This win followed members' rejection of a sub-standard agreement in a ballot in November.
- Longstanding member Anne Morrison was presented with life membership of the ASU at the Labor Day dinner at Geelong Trades Hall. Anne has worked tirelessly as the office manager at Geelong Trades Hall for twenty years. There would not be many uniosts in Geelong who have not had the benefit of Anne's support over the years. "Like many ASU members working in administration in trade union offices Anne is a dedicated unionist and we are so proud of her contribution to the Geelong community" said Branch Secretary Ingrid Stitt.

## Libs back out of pay equity promise

Despite a promise during the state election that the Coalition would support pay equity, the Baillieu government has moved to withdraw support for the landmark women's pay case for SACS workers.

In a submission to Fair Work Australia, the Victorian Government threatened to reduce community services and community sector jobs if the tribunal awarded significant pay rises.

The Baillieu Government stated that it would prioritise budget surplus of at least \$100million a year over the commitment to equal pay in the SACS sector.

## Manpower workers unionise and win

Before workers at *Manpower* defence recruitment called the ASU, they were told they'd have to work through the Melbourne Cup Day holiday without extra pay. But just before the start of the Spring Racing Carnival, Rebecca joined up with a group of Manpower workers.

"It's my nature to stand up" said Rebecca, pictured. "I understand

when people can't. I don't understand people who won't".

With a newly unionised workforce, manpower management was forced to pay appropriate penalty rates on Cup Day. So the bookies weren't the only ones to win big!

**And they're off...**

ASU Organiser Gail Drummond said that while the penalty rates

for holidays were a great start, Manpower and other workplaces will benefit from more widespread unionisation. "The more workers we represent at a workplace, the better our bargaining position becomes. So we really look forward to organising this workplace during 2011".



New delegate Rebecca Anderson



## Inside March's Union News: the ASU Clean and Green Guide

Climate change is one of the most pressing economic, social and environmental challenges we face, and Australians will be hit hard if we do not respond with urgent and decisive action to reduce pollution, improve energy efficiency and support the transition to a low carbon economy.

Unions representing workers in all sectors and industries are more than willing to make a strong start on the move to a low pollution economy, which includes investment in new industries and compensation for households.

In order to facilitate behavioural change at work, the ASU Victorian Private Sector Branch launched its 'Clean and Green Guide' last December. The paper guide provides a few handy tips on how to reduce waste and energy consumption in the workplace. The full guide is provided as a CD.