



# ORGANISE

Union News for delegates and workplace representatives



Organise Issue 6, November 2011 ASU Victorian Private Sector Branch, L1, 117 Capel Street North Melbourne 3051

## ASU calls for action to secure quality service jobs, protect workers

The ASU is supporting the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work launched late October by the ACTU, and calls for a renewed focus on securing jobs in the Australian services sector.

Launched as part of the unions' Action Plan for Jobs, the inquiry is the first formal investigation of the growth and spread of casual, contract, labour hire and other forms of insecure work in Australia, and the impact it has on workplace rights, family finances, and society.

Australia has one of the highest rates of insecure work in the developed world. Around 40% of Australian workers are working in insecure employment such as casual work, fixed-term work, contracting or labour hire. Their work is characterised by unpredictable, fluctuating pay, limited or no access to paid leave, irregular working hours, and a lack of job security.

In services industries and particularly in customer service, 'sham contracting' arrangements are rife. Under sham contract arrangements, employers classify their staff as independent contractors rather than employees to avoid leave, super and redundancy payments.

Crucially, companies engaging in insecure work arrangements are also more able to move their services jobs off-shore. The

ASU has prepared a joint paper with the Finance Sector Union (FSU) on the consequences of off-shoring for Australia's services sector.

Branch Secretary Ingrid Stitt commended the launch of the ACTU's Independent Inquiry. "The first step in correcting the crisis in insecure work is to document the real, lived experience of workers in insecure arrangements. This inquiry will shed light on the problems created by insecure work, and enable us to start addressing those problems".

"Unions know, through our talks with members, that Australian workers aren't satisfied with short-term and casual contracts. We want job security, work-life balance, and the entitlements we are owed. I look forward to the report's recommendations."

The Inquiry is now open to submissions. The ASU will be making a submission to the inquiry on behalf of members, and individual members can also lodge submissions via [securejobs.org.au](http://securejobs.org.au)



## Jetstar members: "Don't take us lightly Jetstar!"

Earlier in the month Jetstar staff grabbed the media's attention away from disputes at big brother Qantas (albeit briefly) with some feisty protected industrial action from check-in staff.

"No weigh day"—a protected action campaign whereby union members refused to charge passengers excess baggage fees—was a hit with passengers, staff and weary industrial reporters alike.

Staff at the seven-year-old airline had never before taken industrial action and were delighted that this first show of unity was so warmly embraced by the travelling public.

The action was also strikingly effective in gaining the attention of Jetstar management. Jetstar

typically makes around \$50,000 in excess baggage charges in a single day. Over the 24 hour protected action period, this revenue went uncollected, demonstrating some of the value of Jetstar's frontline customer service staff.

Following the action, Jetstar sat down at the bargaining table ready to negotiate for the first time in *six months!* The company made improvements to redundancy clauses, conversions, and minimum hours for part-time staff. The offer is still far from ideal, and ASU bargaining reps are keen to keep working for a better deal for staff and we will keep you posted on progress.

The ASU now represents around 97% of Jetstar's customer service staff. Members are seeking a pay rise, a fair redundancy clause, a legitimate classification structure and transparent part-time to full-time conversion processes.

We look forward to our Jetstar delegates and members securing an agreement soon.



# HiChem staff join up, take action & win within months

In the previous edition of *Organise* we reported on the newly unionised administration office at HiChem paint manufacturing, who were demanding conditions equal to those of their male colleagues in the factory.

In October, the administration staff took a full day of protected industrial action.

After some weeks of negotiation, we are pleased to report that HiChem staff have achieved some great outcomes in their new agreement, including a 3.5% wage increase plus further pay for meeting KPIs, a sick leave incentive and increased redundancy provisions. Further, existing conditions have now been locked into an agreement.

So impressed were HiChem members with the bargaining efforts of their delegate Alicia that they nominated her for delegate of the year. HiChem ASU member Michelle Hollis wrote “Before we joined the ASU we did not all work as a team and some of us did not get along very well. Now that we are ASU members and taking industrial action we have bonded as a team, we get along really well and all of us can see that Alicia is doing a fantastic job as a delegate.”



## Delegates convene for a stronger union future

ASU Delegates and Activists recently turned out in force on a dreary Melbourne morning for the ASU’s biennial Delegates & Activists Conference. As usual the event was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Held atop the Nursing Federation’s inspiring seven-story Melbourne complex (servicing their 61,000 Victorian members), the conference looked to the future of the ASU, and the vital contribution delegates make in shaping the union.



A highlight of the conference was the address by Assistant Federal Treasurer Bill Shorten, who pointed to the enormous growth potential for service sector unions and encouraged delegates to look analytically at business’ claims around sinking productivity. “Why is it that whenever we’re in bargaining, employees are asked to compete with wages in

Manila, but whenever we consider CEO remuneration the company supposedly has to compete with London and New York?”

### Delegate of the year!

The ASU received more nominations than ever before for the esteemed prize of “Delegate of the Year”. Over fifty nominations were received for more than thirty delegates. Each of these nominations was a resounding endorsement of workplace delegates by their grateful colleagues.

The eight finalists selected for the award were:  
**Amanda Dando** – Jetstar Avalon Airport  
**Alicia Seccas** – Hi Chem  
**Carita Kazakoff** – Slater and Gordon  
**Enrico Burgio** – Maurice Blackburn  
**Jacki Gadsby** – RACV  
**John Casey** – Qantas Telesales  
**Rebecca Anderson** – Manpower DFP  
**Robyn Bull** – Target Store Support Office

Amanda Dando was named runner up and awarded an iPod nano and Gold Class cinema tickets for her outstanding work at Jetstar. Members cited her tireless dedication to her role, “even during maternity leave”.

Finally, Branch President Vicki Rogers and Assistant National Secretary Linda White shared the pleasure of announcing Robyn Bull as the winner of 2011 Delegate of the Year. Robyn showed uncompromising dedication in securing a better deal for her colleagues in negotiations with Target, culminating in Target head office staff taking industrial action over Christmas and January this year. Members at Target wrote to the ASU of Robyn’s passion for the role and her success in rallying members to the cause. Receiving the award, Robyn was visibly moved.

The nominees for Delegate of the Year are all held in high esteem by their colleagues, but the ASU would like to thank all delegates for the work you put in on behalf of your coworkers. Representing members is an often thankless and difficult job, but the conference reminded us of our shared ambitions amongst a wide network of union activists to make our union workplaces stronger and safer. Thanks to all who attended.



### Delegates’ Conference - Have you done your homework yet?

- “Fan” the ‘ASU - Organise’ facebook page <[facebook.com/asuvc](http://facebook.com/asuvc)> or follow @ASU\_Organise on twitter
- Register for the delegates section of the website to gain access to exclusive materials [www.asuvc.org/delegates-login](http://www.asuvc.org/delegates-login)
- Sign up for ASU rewards at [www.asuvc.org/my-rewards](http://www.asuvc.org/my-rewards)
- Put the regular posters appearing in “Organise” up on your workplace bulletin board