



**2018-  
2019**

**Australian  
Unemployed  
Workers'  
Union**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

by **Hayden Patterson**

**VICE-PRESIDENT  
& National Branch  
Co-ordinator**

Vice  
President

**IN THIS SECTION:**

- 1. AUWU representations**
- 2. C.O.M. recommendations**
- 3. Achievements**
- 4. Media, Photos & Posters**

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# 1.AUWU Representations (Branch Events)

## as National Branch Coordinator & Vice President

- **Perth** - Spoke at the AUWU/APN WA/WACOSS forum.  
    'Making Poverty Political' (unemployment, disability & housing security)
  - Marched on behalf of the AUWU in National Unions Rally.
- **Geelong** - Met with Geelong Branch members.
- **Ballarat** - Spoke on behalf of the AUWU at Unions Rally.  
    'Collective Union March and Celebration'
- **Bendigo** - Met with Bendigo Branch members.
  - Finalised associate membership of Trades Hall.
- **Sydney** - Met with Inner West Branch members and National Secretary.
- **Melbourne** – Attended AUWU forum @ Trades Hall.  
    'Virginia Eubanks'
  - Attended AUWU/NUW strategy meeting.
- **Canberra** – Met with Canberra Branch members.
- **Adelaide** – Spoke at AUWU/SACOSS/CEDA/WYATT forum.  
    'Raise the Rate'
  - Spoke at AUWU/PHM-Oz/SACOSS forum.
  - 'SA – the Heaps Unfair State' (growing inequality and disadvantage)
  - Spoke at AUWU/APN Anti-Poverty Week forum.
  - Organised AUWU/GetUp forum.
  - 'Basic Income Guarantee & Job Guarantee'
- **Ceduna** – Held AUWU Ceduna Branch meeting/BBQ  
    'Cashless Welfare Card'  
    (Branch member/community consultation with Senator Rachel Siewart – Greens)
- **Advocacy Training** : Crowdcasts/Alumni facebook group/certificates/transcript

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# 1.AUWU Representations (External Events)

- **Leadership 2019 – Canberra – Australian Progress**
  - spoke to 220 CEO's and industry leaders RE: AUWU & Raise the Rate
- **Budget Breakfast 2019 – Sydney – ACOSS**
  - represented AUWU at ACOSS presentation
- **Management Masterclass 2019 – Melbourne – Australian Progress**
  - completed training to present to senior volunteers at AUWU
- **Lobbying Trip 2019 – Canberra – AUWU/GetUp**
  - met with 20+ Senators & MP,s/Press Conference/Media stories
- **CEO & Founders Retreat – Melbourne - Australian Progress**
  - 17 Founding CEO's workshopping AUWU and other issues
- **Department of Jobs 2019**
  - Regular meetings with Dept regarding TCF evaluation, mutual obligations, language etc
- **New Employment Services Trial Reference Group**
  - Appointed a seat on NEST reference group meeting monthly throughout trial until 2022
- **New Employment Services Trial Working Group**
  - Observed SA NEST Working Group (November 2019)
- **Anti-Poverty Week – Adelaide – AUWU/APN**
  - Spoke at APN even at as AUWU representative on Cashless Welfare card
- **Greens Conference – Adelaide – AUWU/Raise the Rate**
  - Spoke with APN regarding Raise the Rate, and stayed for conference (organized R.Siewart Ceduna)
- **Greens Conference – North Adelaide – AUWU**
  - AUWU table and membership signup
- **United Voice Conference – Adelaide – AUWU**
  - AUWU table and membership signup
- **NAPWHA & AFAO National Conferences – Sydney – AUWU**
  - Speech and Powerpoint presentation on Cashless Welfare Card

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## 2. C.O.M. recommendations



2019 saw significant changes to the Committee of Management as we faced many obstacles, and worked hard to improve process, and also establish standardised communication that would be fully inclusive to all AUWU volunteers and officeholders. The union underwent significant organisational structure changes which had varying outcomes.

Whilst National Operations began meeting fortnightly via teleconference/google meets, the National Branch Coordination meetings began to see less participation and had minimal representation from the states ultimately seeing the meetings become more one to one meetings with participating State & Branch Coordinators in 2019.

The most significant change to the structure of the AUWU Committee of Management was the new condition for any officeholder holding an Operations role being ineligible to hold a Committee role, and vice versa.

The 2019/2020 Committee will also be significantly smaller than the 2018/2019 initial committee.

Great progress was made with training for our senior officeholders through various organisations and opportunities, with great opportunities to share, expand and develop that knowledge throughout 2020.

One main issue I believe the AUWU should address during the next year is transparency, communication, and inclusion across all levels of the union. There are some AUWU volunteers who work very diligently and devotedly for the collective good of our entire membership, and for the most part, reimbursements can be difficult to receive, or with considerable delay. There are some AUWU members more out of pocket than others also. I have visited/hosted/met with & engaged members from around Australia throughout 2019, and had the pleasure of seeing some really valuable team members come on board as well.

These new team members allowed us to get a good contribution/management and success rate with Advocacy both through our AUWU National Advocacy Support line, and online/via email. It also allowed us to make some great submissions to several senate enquiries, run a survey of jobseeker experiences, and so much more.

### 3.Achievements

As Vice President of the AUWU during 2018/2019, I was successful in securing a position to represent the AUWU on the ACOSS board beginning December, 2019 until December, 2022. I was also successful in securing a position representing the AUWU on the New Employment Services Trial Reference Group beginning September, 2019 until 2022. These appointments are particularly important as we are the ONLY peer to peer network offering advocacy and support while representing all unemployed and underemployed Australians who are living below the poverty line, and it is our collective voice that brings the stark reality of life on income support payments while enduring punitive measures that continue to grow and target our most vulnerable.



**New Employment Services Trial Reference Group (September, 2019) first meeting in Canberra.**

The AUWU received wide exposure around the country and in many forums, with great support and interest in our demands, our campaigns, and the development of our volunteers. Our social media reach has increased consistently, and our membership continues to grow at phenomenal rates, with a growing number of regular activities around the country on a grass roots level. A particular interest to people is our National Advocacy Line.

I would like to make a special thanks to Mick Smart who has provided so many fantastic, high quality posters advertising dozens of events again throughout this year!

July 2019 saw the first AUWU office open giving us a physical office as our National Head Office in Adelaide.

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## 4. Media, Posters & Photos



**VISIT:** Australian Unemployed Workers' Union SA branch coordinator Hayden Patterson and Greens Senator Rachel Siewert spoke to locals as part of a visit to Ceduna to gather insight about the cashless welfare card. Picture: Luca Cetta

Senator Rachel Siewert heard the concerns of a number of people on the cashless welfare card during a trip to Ceduna this









# Some media links from the past 12 months...

2018 : [https://10daily.com.au/news/politics/a180730ure/top-earners-get-as-much-in-two-weeks-as-poorest-do-in-a-year-20180730?fbclid=IwAR39-g\\_5dEkuNavDzNkL5PSSILNgv4S24Rim05P9Gqh-Pa\\_2U6-SJWKoSV8](https://10daily.com.au/news/politics/a180730ure/top-earners-get-as-much-in-two-weeks-as-poorest-do-in-a-year-20180730?fbclid=IwAR39-g_5dEkuNavDzNkL5PSSILNgv4S24Rim05P9Gqh-Pa_2U6-SJWKoSV8)

<https://www.3cr.org.au/suwa/episode-201811091730/unemployed-workers-fight-single-mums-rehab-recipients-public-housing>

November 2018 : <https://www.papertracker.com.au/radio/unemployed-workers-union-ceduna-cashless-card/>

January 2019 : <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=5171ad22-f8a7-45cf-bba1-0f99a14a7525&subId=667232>

July 2019 : <https://ontherecordunisa.com.au/2019/07/01/fighting-for-their-future-an-inside-look-at-the-grassroots-struggle-to-raise-newstart/>

<https://atheistfoundation.org.au/forums/showthread.php?33243-AUS-Australian-Unemployed-Workers-Union-Now-Has-A-National-Office>

August 2019 : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThaEuP13DoY>

Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 : <https://www.westcoastsentinel.com.au/story/6369590/senator-gets-cashless-card-insight/>

Sept 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 : <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6377093/newstart-recipients-verdict-on-cashless-welfare/>

Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019 : <https://indaily.com.au/news/2019/09/16/the-murky-status-of-sas-sex-for-accommodation-market/>

Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 : <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2019/09/17/online-ads-offering-housing-in-exchange-for-sex-exploitative-but-not-illegal/>

Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 : <https://blogs.flinders.edu.au/southgate-institute-news/2019/09/25/peoples-health-movement-meeting-where-does-the-progressive-health-movement-go-in-an-era-of-neo-liberalism/>

October, 2019 :

[https://napwha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NAPWHA\\_AGM19\\_Hayden-Patterson-Cashless-Welfare-Card.pdf](https://napwha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NAPWHA_AGM19_Hayden-Patterson-Cashless-Welfare-Card.pdf)

December 2019 : <https://www.fwd.org.au/speakers>

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# Profit and Loss

## Australian Unemployed Workers' Union Inc. 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

	30 Jun 19	30 Jun 18	30 Jun 17
<b>Income</b>			
Donations - appeals (Cash)	83	701	-
Donations - major (up to 10K)	21,000	6,000	-
Donations - recurring (Regular Giving)	7,440	2,555	7,855
Events - campaign	630	-	-
Events - training/organising	-	1,052	-
Membership Fees	-	250	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>29,153</b>	<b>10,558</b>	<b>7,855</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>29,153</b>	<b>10,558</b>	<b>7,855</b>
<b>Less Operating Expenses</b>			
Accounting and Audit fees	565	120	-
Advertising - General	220	-	-
Advertising - Social Media	1,465	-	-
Advertising Ceduna SAu	100	-	-
Bank Fees	(2)	24	-
Consulting & Accounting	600	-	-
Depreciation	-	443	-
Entertainment	116	-	-
Entertainment Ceduna S.Australia	50	-	-
Equipment Hire	-	100	-
Equipment Hire Ceduna	100	-	-
Food and beverage at fundraising	369	-	-
Food and beverage at fundraising Ceduna	89	-	-
Freight & Courier	219	-	-
General Expenses	100	107	1,211
General Expenses Ceduna S Aust	71	-	-
Insurance - public liability South Aust Parents Next	186	-	-
Office Expenses	-	274	-
Printing & Stationery	1,180	616	-
Printing and Stationery Ceduna Sau	45	-	-
Subscriptions	150	40	-
Survey Stipend	1,460	-	-
Telephone & Internet	1,349	333	-
Telephone and Internet Ceduna SA	45	-	-
Travel - National	5,945	822	-
Travel National SACeduna	500	-	-
Wages and Salaries	1,920	-	-
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>16,842</b>	<b>2,879</b>	<b>1,211</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>12,311</b>	<b>7,680</b>	<b>6,644</b>

# Balance Sheet

Australian Unemployed Workers' Union Inc.  
As at 30 June 2019

30 JUN 2019

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## Assets

### Bank

AUWU Inc	30,685.87
AUWU Inc. Operations Account	223.85
<b>Total Bank</b>	<b>30,909.72</b>

<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>30,909.72</b>
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<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>30,909.72</b>
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## Equity

Current Year Earnings	12,310.97
Retained Earnings	18,598.75
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>30,909.72</b>



AUSTRALIAN UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' UNION

**Operations Committee Report to the  
Australian Unemployed Workers' Union  
(AUWU) Annual General Meeting (AGM)  
2019.**

Drafted by Alex North as National Coordinator and the  
members of the Operations Committee



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# Introduction

Despite its now established presence, the Operations Committee (OC) is in fact a new arm of the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union (AUWU). Formed in early 2019 by the National Coordinator, it has since grown into a permanent body of the union responsible for the day-to-day running and coordination of the AUWU's functions (see: National Coordinator's report for a brief history). As of November 2019, the Operations Committee consists of:

- ★ **Alex North** as *National Operations Coordinator*.
- ★ **Tracey Smallwood** as *National Advocacy Coordinator*.
- ★ **Gene Saračić** as *Online Advocacy Coordinator*.
- ★ **Hayden Patterson** as *National Division Coordinator*.
- ★ **Sean Kenny** as *Campaigns Coordinator*.
- ★ **Jeremy Poxon** as *Communications Coordinator*.
- ★ **James Craig** as *Social Media Coordinator*.
- ★ **Simone Casey** as *Senior Policy Adviser*.
- ★ (Vacant) *Research Officer (although, Connor Jolley has coordinated some of our report output - chiefly, the Greens Job Guarantee policy report).*

The Operations Committee report is structured as a collective, single report of the Operations Committee's activities over 2019. Each member was requested to submit to the National Coordinator a report on their activities, a recommended template was the following:

*Briefly discuss the requirements of your role and the state you found it in (or started as first office holder), and the broad stroke progress you have made since then.*

- *Reference the [Annual Plan](#) and the progress of your 6-months goals.*
- *Outline your major achievements/solid work.*
- *Note areas that need attention/improvement.*
- *Conclude with a statement about the importance of your role and re-sum the key achievements.*

The report is introduced with the report by the National Coordinator detailing the formation of the Operations Committee, its key achievements and successes, its issues and areas for improvement, and some recommendations for the 2020 Operations Committee. It is then followed by each member's individual report.

If there are any questions, please email [alex.north@auwu.org.au](mailto:alex.north@auwu.org.au)



# 1. National Operations Coordinator Report

***(Written by Alex North as National Operations Coordinator)***

## **Preamble**

My report is structured into 4 sections, each detailing the major activities undertaken by myself as National Coordinator of the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union.

Throughout my time with the union, I have been fortunate enough to hold many different positions and contribute in dozens of working groups, but those that do not specifically pertain to my role as National Coordinator<sup>1</sup> have not been included in this report.

Throughout this report, it is paramount that you keep in mind that all of the achievements and work I have done as National Coordinator could not have been done without the support, friendship, and dedication of all of the comrades who have so generously given their time to the unemployed workers' movement. I would especially like to acknowledge my fellow members of the Committee of Management and of course my fantastic comrades in the Operations Committee.

## **1. The formation of the Operations Committee (O.C)**

I was elected to the position of *Ordinary Committee Member* of the Committee of Management (CoM) at the 2018 Annual General Meeting (AGM). As mentioned in the preface, before 2019 there was no Operations Committee and there was no "National Operations Coordinator". There was only the elected body of the Committee of Management that carried out all of the AUWU's governance/executive and operations functions. As the AUWU began as a small advocacy group in 2014 and rapidly expanded into a national organisation, the structure of the union still bore the birthmarks (and defects) of this humble origin.

An example of this, was that the CoM delegated campaigns activities to me in late December 2018 to January 2019 as a temporary "Campaigns Coordinator". My role was to coordinate the campaign ideas and decisions delegated by the CoM. During this period, myself and Nijole Naujokas worked tirelessly in uncovering and advocating for the "participants" in the punitive ParentsNext program. Culminating in workshops being held across Australia to assist single parents in knowing their rights in the program, an AUWU senate inquiry submission, encouraging single parent's to speak out about their experiences in the media, and myself representing the union with a participate and advocate at the much publicised Senate Inquiry. But this period also made it

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<sup>1</sup> see: National Structure Document: Position Descriptions

evident to me that there was a severe lack of clarity regarding the operations of the union and who and what people did.

Conscious of this, the February Committee of Management meeting passed a new structure document that for the first time delegated operations coordination and outside the CoM to the new "National Operations Coordinator". At that same meeting, I was voted in unanimously as the first National Operations Coordinator of the AUWU and to start immediately.

My first priority was to create and develop a national team for the AUWU. At the time, there were only three other positions that worked with the CoM: *National Advocacy Coordinator* (formed in 2015), *Media Officer* (formed in 2017), and the *National Branch Coordinator* (formed in 2018). At the time, Hayden Patterson was occupying National Branch Coordinator role and Jeremy Poxon the Media Officer role, and the National Advocacy Coordinator position was vacant. Clearly there was an urgent need for some structure to be created and this set in motion my proudest achievement of the year - the formation of the Operations Committee.

I strongly believed that the *original* position description afforded the National Coordinator overreaching powers and left too much potential for complete control over the AUWU operations. Although my dedication to the union could not be questioned, it was obvious to me that major decision-making powers needed to be shared in a collective body of senior democratically elected members. Of course there was some trial and error, and the initial formation of the Operations structure was changed and updated, and now reflects that indicated in the National Structure Documents.

The first meeting of the Operations Committee<sup>2</sup> (OC) was held on the 4th of April 2019, and it became evident that there were significant structural issues in the AUWU that reflected the general trends in the organisation at that time:

*Poor administration/record keeping practices, a lack of clarity of union structure and processes to office holders, unclear position descriptions/role boundaries of volunteers, insufficient development of union policies, individuals taking on enormous workloads, a lack of oversight of office holders' activities, poor communication and correspondence practices, and a general inexperience in organising and strategic planning.*

Alarming, Tracey Smallwood (the newly elected Advocacy Coordinator) reported that the Advocacy Hotline, Advocacy Intake Forms, and Advocacy Emails, were in a

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<sup>2</sup> Founding members were as follows: Sean Kenny, Gene Saraci, Tracey Smallwood, Hayden Patterson, James Criag, Jeremy Poxon (apologies), and Alex North.

state of complete disarray. Most disturbingly of all, was a backlog of callbacks and emails dating back to September 2018. Thanks to the enormous efforts of both Tracey and Owen Bennett (among other advocacy volunteers), every single email, form, or voicemail was followed up on and apologies were ensured. From then on, the new Advocacy Working Group team (Tracey, Gene Saraci as Online Advocacy Coordinator, and other advocates) have ushered in a new era for AUWU advocacy services and have done so with a degree of professionalism and energy that any AUWU member would be proud of.

However, it is crucial never to forget that the AUWU was (and still is) an entirely volunteer-run organisation. As the AUWU began as a small activist and advocacy group, it was to be expected that the AUWU - as an organisation - would encounter significant roadblocks when becoming national. The administration skills, management abilities, and leadership qualities required to coordinate a national organisation did not necessarily translate from the original AUWU's advocates' experience.

The minutes of this first meeting further detailed some of the major issues encountered by the new members of the OC, and they revealed a dynamic that often underpinned OC's meetings for the remainder of the year: (a) *Identifying Systemic Issues and Initiating Reform* and (b) *An Increasing Importance/Output of Activity of OC as central to the AUWU's operation*. At the meeting, it was decided that the OC would meet fortnightly and would plan and report on each working group/coordinators activities in this meeting. Since the first meeting in April, has met OC 12 times<sup>3</sup> and created the first ever Annual Plan for the AUWU.

## **2. Major Contributions/Chief Activities**

The defining features of my time as National Operations Coordinator has been to reform the structure of the AUWU, create new processes and procedures to reflect the reality of day-to-day operations, and fundamentally change the organisation for the future.

My major contributions to the AUWU over the last 10 months since starting my role as National Coordinator in late February are as follows:

- The Creation of the Operations Committee: defining position descriptions and roles, supporting working groups, filling vacancies, organising regular meetings, and building the AUWU's first truly national team.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: the Working Groups have met more frequently to discuss pressing matters and concerns, and report back to Operations Committee meetings.



- Reforming the AUWU's organisational structure to be a more democratic, transparent, and more dynamic union fit to concrete conditions: (see *the Annual Plan and the two National Structure Documents I drafted*).
- Writing the first ever Annual Plan for the AUWU and achieving the majority of the targets/goals by the 6 month deadline.
- Managing the Operations Committee and growing its capabilities and functions: chiefly among this is, providing mentorship to OC members, assisting them in their coordinator roles, and ensuring the Working Groups complete their responsibilities delegated to them.
- Developing an effective action item ticketing system, which has significantly increased the follow up and completion of actions undertaken in meetings.
- Working on AUWU senate inquiries submissions and ensuring that they are completed and submitted on time; and representing the AUWU at senate inquiries.
- Assisting the Committee of Management in transitioning its role to an executive and governance function.
- Promoting the AUWU and building relationships with key stakeholders, culminating to the point where we are now recognised as the peak body for unemployed workers'.

### **3. Areas for Improvement**

Despite a largely successful year, there were some genuine concerns and areas that need attention. Additionally, I recognise that I could have done some things better in my role and have learnt greatly from the experiences. Listed here are some areas that need improvement:

- *Communication*: throughout the year, there were issues with OC members not communicating with each other outside of OC meetings. I tried *WorkPlace* as a communication platform for OC members, and despite early signs of encouragement, it never took off and only half of the OC used it regularly. Currently, we are communicating via email, phone, and text messaging and this is working acceptably for the moment. But there are still issues when it comes to manners of replying (hours available/not available, replying in a prompt manner, cross-communication with other OC members and office holders). The issues trend to a larger scale problem which is with the "work culture" of the AUWU. Despite having the Guiding Principles setting the basics of our union's culture, there are currently no documents detailing how we agree to work together and what sort of work environment we want (this is a broader issue extending outside the OC as well). As a temporary solution, I surveyed the OC to provide feedback on these issues and implemented some of the suggested provided. The last two meetings of OC marked a progression, and I'm pleased with the state of our communication for the time being.

- *Annual Plan (AP)*: Despite the general accomplishment of writing the union's first annual plan, the annual plan was lacking in some key manners. Most blaringly, the AP is not budgeted. This lead to some day to day frustrations with requesting out of budget expenditure forms for basic operating costs, and limited what Working Groups conceptualised as possible financially. Secondly, the AP was perhaps written a little hastily and did not allow coordinators enough time to think through what they'd like to achieve over a 6-12 month period. As the OC was barely 2 months old, it may have been premature to try and draft an Annual Plan while coordinators were still getting used to their roles. However, it was a very valuable learning experience and the OC achieved far more than was laid out in the plan.
- *National Branch Structure*: as I spent the majority of my role focusing on the national team of the AUWU, I did not focus my attention on significantly reforming the National Division Structure and assisting the National Branch Coordinator. The AUWU does have ongoing issues with not engaging with State and Local branches enough as a National organisation, and we can do better. Additionally, there is a substantial number of volunteer signs-up that are not being contacted by state coordinators or followed up by the National Division Coordinator. This is a major issue for the future and longevity of the union, and must be reformed come 2020. In December, I plan to begin with a survey/report with the outgoing National Division Coordinator on the state of this.
- *Training*: an area I did not explore enough this year was training opportunities for OC members and developing a training program for new volunteers/branch coordinators. In retrospect, this is something that is sorely needed. While our advocacy training is great for training advocates, we do not have any training available (beyond mentorships) for people to learn the basics of organising and administration.

#### 4. Conclusion

*"Welfare history is rarely if ever written with a sense that the clients of the system have a part in the making of policy and administration. But in the 1930's, the history of unemployed relief and therefore the history of state provision for the unemployed cannot be written as a top down application of policy by either political parties, government, bureaucracies, or organisations like charities that presume to speak for clients. The clients themselves, the unemployed, demanded to be heard, and were...As individuals they were subject to the all-encompassing power of the relief system and its agents. As individuals they had lost control of their lives, they were supplicants. **Collectively they were participants in Depression politics. The difference is monumental.**"*

CHARLIE FOX *"Fighting Back: The Politics of the Unemployed in Victoria in the Great Depression"*

Overall, 2019 has been a pivotal year the AUWU: in terms of formation of the Operations Committee, the AUWU being the recognised peak body by media, government and NGOs, developing our standing as a significant submission and report body, building enormous grass-roots pressure for our list of demands (chiefly raising newstart, exposing the unemployment crisis and the employment services system, and abolishing the cashless welfare card), and - in general - finding a balance between being a radical movement for unemployed, underemployed, and unwaged workers', and building an organisation to fight for those changes.

For the first time since the Great Depression, unemployment is no longer being perceived as individual failing by the public. Fraser's government, in opposition and especially in power, was the first of many Australian governments to implant and foster the pernicious myth of the dole bludger in the public's consciousness. Thanks to the countless efforts of the rank and file members of the AUWU, organising in their local community, that myth has been largely dispelled. Persus's cap has been lifted from their eyes, and they can see the monster of systemic, structural unemployment. It is now up to us, in 2020 and beyond, to forge the connection between unemployed *and* employed workers' to slay that monster.

## 2. National Advocacy Coordinator Report

*(Written by Tracey Smallwood as National Advocacy Coordinator)*

### **Advocacy Report for AGM 2019**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Average</b>
16-20	2.132%
21-25	7.82%
26-30	8.5%
31-35	11.88%
36-40	6.18%
41-45	5.66%
46-50	7.06%
51-55	14.28%
55-59	4.44%
60+	22.24%

There has been a slow downturn in the calls we are getting on the Hotline in the last 3 months. At the same time there is a slight increase with Emails. There will be a team of 14 on the hotline after the new year, ready to go. I will slowly help them used to the line to start stronger than ever next year. Ideally, I would like there to be one team on one week the next team on the other week.

I will be having monthly meetings with the team every month, to find where training is needed and if they need a break looking after each is so important.

Recipient	Average
Jobactive	64.68%
DES	18.16%
DSP	4.04%
Jobactive stats have stayed steady	
DES has risen overall by 3%	
DSP has also risen by 2% with the Governments under 35 ruling.	

Employment Services Provider	Average
Max	4.6%
Workskil	3.2%
AMP	3.2%
Wise	2.8%

Max has been at the top or second for the majority as the worst Job Network with Workskil vying for top spot. AMP has held steady with complaints. Wise Employed as shot into fourth with some horrid treatment of late all centred in NSW far north.

Issue Summary	Average
Agency Failing to Provide Basic Services	40.42%
Centrelink Issue	30%
Dept. of Employment Hotline Failure	3.46%
Denied Choice of AAR Activities	7.82%
Forced to Provide Payslips	10.16%
Forced to Sign Job Plan	2.36%
Job Agency bullying	34.04%
Medical Condition Not Recognised	8.24%
Unfair Penalty Imposed	8.64%
Too many appointments	5.94%

Too many AAR Requirements	4.28%
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Interested in	Average
Telling Story on AUWU forum	12.72%
Volunteering	52.58%
Signing Up to AUWU	31.48%
Talking to Media	10%
Donate	10%

What area of volunteering	Average
Advocacy	49.59%
Communications	2.62%
Joining Local Branch or Action Group	43.02%

Has Job Agency Explained Rights?	Average
No	94.42%
Yes	6.16%

Additionally, I would like to find a better way to get information on people wanting to Volunteer this has been something that has been lacking.



### 3. Online Advocacy Coordinator Report

***(Written as Gene Saraci as Online Advocacy Coordinator)***

Prior to February 2019, the AUWU had no previous structure in place to expand its advocacy service online. After meeting with Owen, Alex and Jeremy to discuss what systems the union had to provide a digital platform for advocacy and how to build on our online effort as an organisation; the role of Online Advocacy Coordinator was created to not only oversee the daily operations of our inbound social media contact – but to also develop a plan for developing a fully dedicated and staffed online support service for members.

In the initial stages, this role was effectively acting as the only volunteer (Online Advocate) with a dedicated purpose to responding to any inbound messages received. Over time and leading into our Extended-Operations Committee Meeting in June held in Melbourne – it had become imperative that we as an organisation invested what we could into building up this platform.

The goals and aims that I took to the Operations Committee for Q3/4 2019 are as follows:

- Fill a team of 5 for specifically online advocacy purposes.
- Have advocates read Online Advocacy Code of Conduct to ensure consistency.
- Video-conference meetings once per week for advocates to debrief and share ideas.
- Provide advocates with login details for Online Advocacy-specific moderator account
- Limiting the total number of AUWU page admins to National Team/CoM.
- Setting up a browser bookmark template with all important links including Intake Forms.
- Log advocacy information in Advocacy Intake Form.

Unfortunately, due to multiple reasons, above all limited access to working hardware in the capacity of my role – implementing these mid-term goals has partially been unsuccessful. Whilst creating a dedicated Online Advocacy-only login for volunteers (Max Rumble), a total restructure of automated messages – including terminating of Chatfuel, rostering system of the entire Advocacy Working Group and upcoming advocacy training sessions booked has been implemented well ahead of their 12-month schedule. We also have near-ready to implement a social media response dashboard called FreshDesk. This will be used by future volunteers rather than direct access to our social media accounts, and can be used by coordinators for reporting, training and coaching.

Online Advocacy needs as equal focus as our hotline – as they are not exclusive of one another. It is my hope that through 2020, the continued development and bolstering of the AUWU's Online Advocacy platform is prioritised and supported by the Committee of Management and Operations Committee; as a lack of communication, support and cooperation unfortunately partially hindered our ability to go from no existence to leading in digitised social advocacy. Providing another means of access to support, advice and action planning is only in the interests of our union. This can be easily achieved by greater collaboration between committees, officeholders and volunteers in the future.

## 4. National Division Coordinator Report

*(Please see Hayden Patterson's Vice President Report for his National Division Coordinator report.*

*Hayden has informed us that he will not be standing as National Division Coordinator post AGM. On behalf of the Operations Committee, we thank comrade Hayden for his time, service, and dedication to the AUWU.)*

# 5. Campaigns Coordinator Report

*(Written by Sean Kenny as Campaigns Coordinator)*

## **Summary**

Campaigns for the AUWU have been mixed with highs and lows. As an organization we are still in the growing phase of understanding how to work as a national campaigns body. Our volunteers and organisers face challenges that other professional campaign and advocacy bodies do not have to but despite these challenges we have achieved an amazing amount in the last 6 months of which campaigns have played a part This report will look at the ongoing campaigns at a national level and look to what pressing needs the AUWU has moving forward if we are to be a successful campaign organization.

## **Current Campaigns**

### **Golden Demerit**

The Golden Demerit campaign is an ongoing campaign designed to put pressure on Job Service Providers that are over represented in complaints to our advocacy team. In brief it is meant to be a sarcastic award given to the worst achieving Provider in a given time period, this award given with a direct action stunt or stall at a JSP site.

The Key difficulty of this campaign is organising it successfully on a national scale, it takes a fair amount of organizational and research effort and with highly differing capacities across branches and regions - expectations I had going in to the campaign clashed with the on the ground realities. The other problem is that the data collected on a national scale informing much of the campaign is not necessarily representative of the experience of unemployed workers in a given area, for example Sarina Russo as the first target is not present in all areas of AUWU activity in Australia. This does not mean the campaign is over merely that it needs to adapt and as we head into the next year.

## **ACOSS Grant**

The latter portion of the last six months has been consumed with securing and beginning the work on a project grant from ACOSS. This grant funding is to perform Raise the Rate activities in several regional capitals, combining video campaigns with barnstorming activist sessions to combine national messaging with local on the ground action. We applied for a \$7000 Grant and were awarded a \$6000 grant. The money for this grant is to be spent on videography equipment, travel, social media, events, and accommodation.

Work has begun on achieving the proposed grant outcomes, videography gear has been purchased, a test trip in regional victoria has been undertaken and the organising for regional QLD events to be completed by the end of the year is underway. An unfortunate roadblock has been the bushfires in NSW/QLD, the original proposal had events in was Coffs Harbor during November but the early and intense fire season has made that unfeasible so in negotiation with ACOSS that trip has been moved to early next year, conditions permitting.

This grant if successfully undertaken is the first major step in building our regional capacity and engagement which was a core goal of the annual plan.

## **Challenges**

### **Finding working national campaign structures**

It is early days for our national campaign strategies and we have still not created a completely successful framework for organising on the ground campaign activities from a national perspective. Local branches have been successful at running their own activities but it has not so far been possible to give the ideal amount of national assistance to helping with their design, or implementation.

### **Maintaining Energy and capacity in the face of hardship**

Like all unemployed workers volunteering while living on Newstart has taken a great toll on my mental health. One of the most important things we can develop is support structures that have more work being undertaken by teams and less by individuals. In the next year I want to ensure that the work of campaigns is shared amongst a number

of keen volunteers who can step up or back as needed and we can ensure as many people are receiving skills training as possible.



## 6. Communications Coordinator Report

*(Written by Jeremy Poxon, as Media Officer/Communications Coordinator)*

### **My role & the current media landscape**

My primary role as the AUWU's media officer is liaising with journalists, and ensuring that the voices of our members (and the organisation broadly) finds proper representation in the media. In this, the Union continues to punch above its weight: our members and office holders have consistently featured in news stories over the past 6 months -- not a week has gone by where I haven't set up an interview/story with someone in the Union.

It's staggering just how different the media landscape is now (compared to when I started in this role in 2017) and just how respected the Union has become in media circles. Issues like Newstart, unemployment, inequality were still on the fringe when I started, but now they have rocketed on to the centre stage.

When *Sunrise* put out one of its usual, vile "dole bludger" segments in late July, I received calls and messages from prominent journos who were outraged on our behalf, and wanting to feature us in counter-stories. Having media folks stick up for us in this way has never happened before (at least in my tenure): thanks to the work we've done, significant pillars of the media industry aren't just listening to us -- they're *actively* on our side.

### **Building our own media capacity**

While working with the establishment media, we have also invested in our own content production: we've released high-quality fundraising videos, educating the public about the crucial work the AUWU does, and asking for donations. Simone Casey, our policy officer, and I continue to write and publish new work, exposing the fault lines in the social security system and advocating for the Union's bold transformative ideas. The comms team is also gearing up to launch a new online newsletter which (we hope) will be *the* new creative and intellectual hub for social security recipients.

Thanks to our active comms crew on social media, we've been driving the online conversation when it comes to social security issues. Most notable here was the viral and incredibly powerful #NotADoleBludger campaign<sup>4</sup> -- started by one of our volunteers -- which got thousands of people talking about their lives in the system, made national headlines, and actually drew a public on-air apology from *Sunrise* (again, something that has never happened before).

In early September I did something a little different and outside my "media" portfolio: with support from GetUp, I organised a lobbying trip to Canberra, lining up meetings with over 35 politicians from all sides of politics. Again, the AUWU made a little history: this was the first time a group of Newstart recipients had ever gone to Canberra to lobby politicians.

From a strictly media standpoint I consider this trip a real success -- we got coverage and write-ups from the ABC, Fairfax, and the AAP (which technically means over a million eyeballs) and my updates from Canberra went viral on Twitter. But, even more importantly, this trip enabled us to present ourselves to the media and the public with a new sense of agency and dignity -- we were able to show the country that unemployed workers aren't just hapless victims, but powerful agents of political change who won't back down (no matter what this government chooses to throw at us). We don't need pundits and professionals and the upper-classes to speak for us -- through our press conference and dealings with politicians, we showed that we are more than capable of speaking for ourselves.

### **Areas of improvement**

- Better coordination of social media and comms output (something that's already been flagged as a problem and the online/comms teams are tackling together)
- Still need to better coordinate our team of comms vollies and give them more of an outlet/opportunity to produce good, exciting works (the newsletter will be a great step towards this)

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<sup>4</sup> It was *number 1 Trending* for several hours in Australia in twitter. An incredible feat, never achieved - as far as we are aware - by another other union.

- Grow our capacity to spruik the Union's positive agenda in the media (especially the advocacy service and our campaign for a GJG, which also deserves its own video).
- Need to fundraise to financially support at least one media/comms worker for the Union -- it's such crucial and hard work (both liasing with the media and coordinating comms vollies), and we must support it properly

## 7. Social Media Coordinator Report

***(Written by James Craig as Social Media Coordinator)***

I came into the National Social Media Coordinator (NSMC) position to take over from a mostly informal approach by various members on the AUWUs various platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube). My first priority was to control the national Facebook page and its associated groups (primarily "AUWU Talk" and "AUWU Social Media Coordination").

Amateur graphics were frequently used in the posting of content on the national page during this early period but did not perform well and have since been mostly sidelined in favour of news-media content, personal stories in very basic graphic templates and AUWU announcements of events and policy.

The aforementioned Facebook groups became repeated scenes of uncivil argument, defamatory and baseless accusations and abuse from multiple individuals (some of whom I suspected to be the same person on different accounts). The membership of "AUWU Talk" was subsequently culled, William Luxford was given the rights and responsibilities to moderate the group and it was rebranded to "AUWU Forum". Meanwhile, "AUWU Social Media Coordination" and various other completely inactive groups were permanently archived to avoid further unexpected incidents on long-forgotten AUWU-brand groups.

In 2019 the national Facebook page has reached more than 21,000 likes and enjoys a weekly post reach of 14-17,000 people. The formalized approach to administration/commentary and preferencing content that is favoured by Facebook's content algorithm has clearly made the national page a significant asset. However, there are changes that must be made. The visual aesthetic of the page, and all of our social media platforms, must be redesigned to revitalize our online presence. The National Social Media Coordinator should also have access to all other branch pages and groups, especially for the purpose of helping the organisation-wide aesthetic update, however at this point I only have access to the Victorian Division page, which I

established to be run by Daniel Barnett. The “blue tick” that verifies our national page as the official presence of the AUWU is still pending approval from Facebook, and that will also make the process of gaining access to other branches easier.

Due to my own deficiencies in understanding the use of Twitter, the regular posting and moderation in that space has been mostly delegated to other volunteers, including Laine Cannard from the Melbourne branch who consistently uploads photos from her Melbourne Outreach events. Meanwhile, Instagram and Youtube remain mostly underutilized, as I have no strategy to make use of them. Youtube requires consistent, high quality uploads for a channel to become successful, and I do not have this content or the time to create it personally. Instagram generally requires highly visual, high-impact posts for a profile to gain traction, and I am unconvinced that the effort to maintain that would produce significantly greater engagement from the Instagram audience.

This year has been successful for our presence on Facebook. Our presence on Twitter is tantamount to subsistence, our Youtube channel is basically an archive for our video content and Instagram is potentially not worth investing in.

## 8. Senior Policy Adviser Report

**(Written by Dr Simone Casey as Senior Policy Adviser)**

The Policy Adviser provides advice and assistance to the Operations Committee (and Committee of Management as necessary) on policy, strategy, legislation, and research relevant to the union.

I commenced in this role in May 2019. Over this six-month period I have fulfilled the requirements of the role by:

- Advising and assisting the Operations Committee (and Committee of Management as necessary) on the following:
  - Providing policy support to the AUWU in regards to reforming employment services, social security policy, and (in general) policy relevant to unemployment/underemployment.
  - Interpreting the *Jobactive* Deed and relevant guiding documents
  - Providing strategic advice for the AUWU in its relationship to the employment services industry, *jobactive* providers, the Department of Jobs and Small Business, the Department of Social Services, and other relevant organisations and bodies.
  - Other Government policy and legislation relevant to the AUWU.
- Attend all operations committee meetings.
- Advising the Advocacy Working Group.

My goals as outlined in the Annual Plan included:

- Advancing arguments for reforms and contribute to debate by writing articles analyzing the benefits and ethics of the TCF, Mutual Obligation and work for the dole.
- Contributing to the design of independent evaluation of the future employment services trials
- Engaging in appropriate networks and forums to promote unified advocacy



- Contributing to the development of a stronger Union with advice on organisational structure
- Contributing strategic thinking to business development and income generation initiatives

In the 6 month period I have contributed as follows:

- Working on the hotline and developing FaQ material to support its operation especially in relation to Mutual Obligations/Work for the Dole
- Advice to executive on reform of employment services and strategy regarding Department of Employment meetings
- Provided governance advice in relation to constitutional reforms, DGR and PBI
- Provided governance advice by re-drafting the Privacy Policy and identifying other areas of compliance development
- Senate Inquiry submissions – Drug Testing Bill and Newstart Adequacy
- Articles in public policy forums such as PowertoPersuade and The Conversation on housing affordability (with over 65,000) page views
- Media advice and engagement on ParentsNext, TCF, Drug Testing and Digitisation
- Academic articles on New Authoritarianism and Workfare; the History of the Breaching Regime and the 'Structural Violence' of work first for single mothers
- TCF data analysis including advice to Senators and journalists; *re timing of release of data, leading to motion for its publication*
- Analysis of TCF data from October Estimates release shared with other advocacy agencies eg HRLC

The Policy Advisor will continue to contribute and influence policy in the fields affecting the Union.

## President's Report

I am extremely proud to say that this year's presidential report is the shortest I have ever presented.

Everyone involved in the union should be proud of this fact. If you're not proud now, then allow me to explain why.

You should be proud because this year our union, which started off more than five years ago with a few people in a room at the Victorian Trades Hall Council, became for the first time a genuinely national union with hundreds of volunteers around the country.

You should be proud because, for the first time, we have a highly skilled team of national coordinators directing the operations of the union in line with the needs and aspirations of our members.

You should be proud because every day we are making history.

Never before has a national team of unemployed workers' activists done this work before – let alone work of such high quality as we saw in the Operations report.

With a national team as good as the one we have, with a report as great as this one, a humble president like me does not have much to add at all. I can just waffle on like this about how proud I am.

Reading the reports of our operation coordinators was the proudest moment I have had as an AUWU president. Five years ago, I would have never have believed a report like this possible. It shows just how far we have come. Today, there is little doubt that we are the national voice of unemployed

workers – even the Morrison Government feels it has no choice but to meet with us. As an entirely self-funded group, with no political affiliations, this is an incredible achievement - something all AUWU members and volunteers should be incredibly proud of.

Our volunteers have built this national union against all odds. As unemployed workers, our volunteers are fighting all the injustices that they are also fighting against. One of the many injustices facing unemployed workers is the nightmare that is living on the Newstart payment – the lowest payment in the developed world – and attending all the required appointments and activities – some of the strictest requirements in the world. In this situation, the easy thing to do would have been to do what the governments wants unemployed workers to do – put your head down, submit to the punishment, blame yourself for your own unemployment and compete against your fellow unemployed workers for the few jobs available. For many of us, this is where we started.

Our volunteers have turned this on its head - at considerable personal cost to themselves, they have dedicated their time to holding the government to account for Australia's unemployment crisis and helping others join the fight against the injustice of unemployment.

This is what makes us a special organisation – we are the only organisation I know in which all of our elected officials and volunteers are directly experiencing the oppression and injustices that they are fighting. This keeps us honest and ensures that we never lose touch with our members – the unemployed workers of Australia. We are by the unemployed and for the unemployed – and always will be. As a result we are

also one of the only organisations fighting to make itself redundant – for a country with no unemployment.

Whether its running our national advocacy line – Australia's first of its kind – coordinating campaigns, meeting with politicians, or amplifying the voices of unemployed workers, our volunteers are the beating heart of this union. To all of them, on behalf of the 2018-19 Committee, I would like to say thank you. Without you the AUWU would not exist. It has been a privilege to work with you all.

My pride today is not just a product of what we have achieved, but also where we have come from. I think I speak for everyone on the Committee when I say that keeping the AUWU running effectively is hard work. As the first national unemployed workers organisation in Australia, there is no blueprint on how to do what we do. No one else has been here before. It's kind of like trying to build a boat while already at sea. We have no choice but to feel our way through – to plug leaks as we see them and adapt quickly to the needs of our members. If we don't – we sink.

This year was by far the most challenging I've had since founding the AUWU in 2014. Due to the massive growth we have experienced over the past 5 years – we now have 13,146 members and hundreds of volunteers across the country – this year the union became too big for the Committee to manage on its own. This, in addition to people intent on undermining the union and the unprofessional conduct of some members, resulted in the Committee becoming an ineffective bottleneck. AUWU coordinators were not getting the support they needed to do their work.

Over the new year period, I had discussions with everyone in the Committee to resolve this problem. I also sought advice from

our allies on how to resolve this issue. After much debate, the solution that the Committee proposed was to split the union into two sections – Governance and Operations. The governance of the union would be handled exclusively by the Committee of Management, while the Operations of the union would be overseen by a new Operations Committee. As part of this, it was proposed that we create a new position – an National Coordiantor – to oversee this Operations sections of the union. The Committee of Management unanimously agreed to this proposal and by April the Operations group was having fortnightly meetings.

A quick look over the reports shows what a success the operations team has been. Not only have this operations group met most of the goals of the annual plan in some respects they have far exceeded them. This is your day comrades – soak it up. If you don't feel pride now I don't know when you ever will.

I wish as a union we could do more to show our appreciation for your work. This I believe is the major challenge facing the AUWU next year - ensuring that those keeping the union alive have the support and the resources necessary to continue to do there work – to continue to make history. Right now we don't do nearly enough - we must do better or sooner or later, we will sink.

The enormity of this task is why I have chosen to nominate once again for President of the AUWU. With your permission, comrades, I would very much like to do you proud as your President.