



PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE

A Publication of the Community & Public Sector Union / Victorian Branch

www.cpsuvic.org

Parliament's Gentle Enforcer

Greg Mills can probably lay claim to one of the most unique roles in the Victorian Public Service. From overseeing the ubiquitous Legislative Chambers tours of school children, conducting daily security screenings of visitors, hearing Nelson Mandela speak in a packed Queens Hall back in 1993 and partaking in celebrations with an Australian cricket team returning from winning the World Cup the job can certainly be diverse.

Unfortunately these occasions of fanfare and elaborate display are the exception rather than the rule for the day-to-day lot of an Attendant at Parliament House.

It's a job that requires respect for tradition and ritual, and a determination in the face of an often unpredictable working environment.

As workloads can quickly escalate during periods of political transition a flexible attitude is an essential element of any Parliamentary Attendant.

"Being a grounded person and expecting



that things can easily change is very important in this job," says Greg, who's now been at Parliament for 17 years.

Reflecting on his career, Greg says, "I've done it all really, from starting off as a nurse, and being 'Mr Mum' for a while, before coming into this role. I've really been around and become the Jack of all Trades, but master of none, but I think it's prepared me well," Greg states with a laconic self-effacing humour that belies his strong commitment to his job and an ability to adjust swiftly to competing demands.

"Changes of government would be the most challenging part of this job, without a doubt," he says, explaining the strain that this can have on not only Parliamentary staff but their families too.

"When Jeff Kennett came in," Greg says, "the sitting hours were very long.

I once worked from a Tuesday morning through to 4am on the Wednesday, and then the following day I was back at 8am.

Parliament kept sitting until Saturday afternoon."

"Similar hours were worked when Steve Bracks was elected to office, yet not quite to the same extent," he reflects.

"2am, or 3am – that was the latest. It's only a person of flexible nature that can withstand working into the early hours of the morning," says Greg.

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Wages Double Standards

While playing chicken little with his election rhetoric warning business that a Rudd Government will take us all back to a centralised wage fixing system, the Prime Minister forgets to mention that his own wage increases are delivered by such a system

See full story on page 3.

CPSU MEMBERS HONoured WITH PUBLIC SERVICE MEDALS

Karen Owen

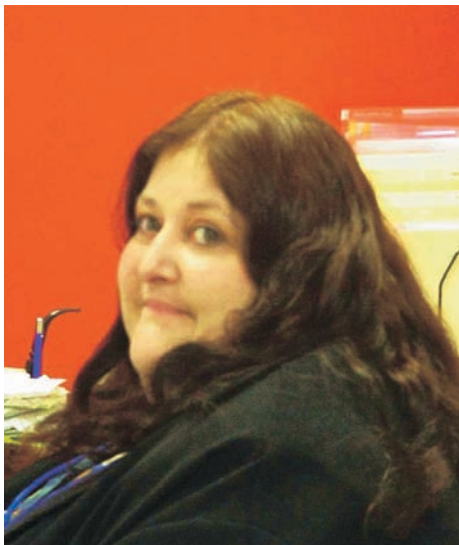
Karen Owen, forensic psychologist for Community Correctional Services, has been awarded a 2007 Public Service Medal for her pioneering work in sex offenders' treatment and rehabilitation.

Managing a team of 24 staff responsible for the assessment and treatment of every sex offender in the state, Karen has ultimate clinical oversight and fulfils roles including policy development and employee training.

Originally a psychiatric nurse and disability nurse, Karen spent time pursuing further studies and performing a variety of roles within the public sector before her recruitment 2 ½ years ago to help head up Community Corrections' dedicated sex offender treatment program – the first program of its kind in Australia. Her role has required her to spend time in Canada being trained up by pioneers of the field, where she has acquired invaluable skills and knowledge to use in leading her team.

Humble about receiving her award, Karen remarks, "While it's a personal honour, any recognition is really a reflection of the team."

"I think it's an acknowledgment of the



fact that ours is one of the best sex offender treatment programs in Australia.

"If the award can raise the profile of the program, then that will be a good outcome. CCS have a problem in attracting staff, as this is not an area that people necessarily jump and down to become involved in. But the work is really very rewarding."



Teresa Zerella

Karen's modesty is echoed by fellow recipient and CPSU member Teresa Zerella.

"It's been a great honour for me personally," says Teresa, who manages the Dispute Settlement Centre (DSC) in the Department of Justice having come across to the service in 1993.

"I accept the award on behalf of the whole team," she says.

"The whole team, the mediators and staff, they do an extremely difficult job very, very well. They're exceptional communicators."

Currently Teresa manages a team of 150 – 200 mediators across the State. Most often, the public's experience of Teresa's team of dedicated support personnel will occur over the telephone, where the dispute (or potential dispute) will be assessed to see whether referral to mediation is suitable.

"The calls will range from simple enquires or advice about something more progressed, say whereby a dispute has escalated into involving police."

Most commonly, neighbourhood or workplace disputes are at issue.

"Really, our role is one of facilitating agreement, as we don't have decision-making powers, and we try to avoid members of the community from taking their dispute to court."

"We try to emphasise agreement being achieved through understanding."



Mandy Smith

"She says things like "this is a great award but I'm just doing what I love", comments Brendan Money, General Manager of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

He is referring to colleague Mandy Smith, the Operations Manager of HM Prison Tarngower – another CPSU member awarded the Public Service Medal Award.

During her absence while currently enjoying a well-deserved break, Mandy is spoken about with high regard by her peers; a person renowned for her sense of balance and fairness, professes Mr Money.

"She is progressive when dealing with prisoners; she is supportive of her staff. She is just known as a very decent person with a very good code of ethics," he says.

Tarngower is a minimum security women's prison with an emphasis on release preparation and community integration. The facility currently holds about 50 women and employs 30 staff.

"Mandy has been working in Correctional Services for twenty years, having worked at both Coburg and Bendigo before to assuming her role at Tarngower," Mr Money explains.

"She is extremely experienced and adept at her job. A true professional," he says.



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your rights at work
worth fighting and voting for

Reflections on NAIDOC Week – A Time for Celebration and Sharing

NAIDOC Week offers the chance for all Australians to celebrate and reflect upon the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NAIDOC or

National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee celebrations are held across the country in the first full week in July.

Fifty years on from its inception the need today to spread its central message of tolerance and diversity is never more significant.

On a practical and personal level for Veronica “Lani” Barnett, Melbourne Museum employee and CPSU’s Indigenous Branch Section active member, this annual Week gives her an opportunity to honor the people of the Wurundjeri and Kulin nations – the traditional custodians of the land where the museum now stands.

Veronica has now the opportunity to educate others of Indigenous culture, ensuring that stories live on.

“Sharing Indigenous knowledge is important to me; I feel the need to pass on knowledge so it’s never lost. And for me, NAIDOC week brings this into focus.”

“It’s about respecting the past and the future. Respecting our culture and sharing it with others.”

Veronica, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, was born in Babinda, North Queensland. Her grandmother on her father’s side was from Bamaga, on the Cape York Peninsula, and her mother’s heritage was Thursday Islander and Torres Strait Islander.

After living what she calls a “more traditional life” until she was twenty years old, she has now been living in “the South” for forty years after a fateful encounter with now husband Brian Barnett, a fellow snake enthusiast.



Along with other CPSU members of our Indigenous Branch Section, Veronica attended Melbourne’s peaceful march through Fitzroy to Federation Square as part of NAIDOC celebrations.

“I think it’s important to remind ourselves that a treaty was never signed here,” she says.

“It’s also important to remember that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can work together and do so every day.”

For many years now Veronica has been an active participant of the union’s Indigenous section which aims to provide a stronger voice for workers within the Victorian public service.

It promotes cooperation and tolerance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike.

Despite some prejudice directed her way in various forms over the years, she’s not one to hold a grudge against others and is grateful for the changes in attitudes over the years – and remains optimistic about the future.

“My husband is not Indigenous and when we got together, in the 60s, walking down the street...” she pauses, “well let’s just say there were a lot of odd looks that came our way” she says and smiles.

“Thankfully this isn’t so much the case today. I know some people are very angry about the

way they’ve been treated but that approach isn’t for me,” she declares.

Veronica says her role as a Customer Museum Officer at Melbourne Museum gives her opportunities to impart her knowledge to those from all walks of life.

Veronica is also a celebrated artist in her own right and her works have been selected for inclusion in major exhibitions including the “Respect for Elders” exhibition at RMIT University and “Once is Too Often” exhibition. Others include those at the Daley Art Gallery at Trinity Grammar, the Hunts Club Exhibition Deer Park and the Footscray Community Art Club.

“Being asked to design something for the union was an honour,” she says. CPSU members can see her original designs featured in our Indigenous Branch Section brochure.

“In addition to my art, which for me is about telling our stories, I’m just really proud to be part of what CPSU does for Indigenous members and I encourage non-members working in the public service to join and get involved.”

CPSU’s has an Indigenous Network who can be contacted at enquiry@cpsuvc.org or by calling 9639 1822 or for more information go to www.cpsuvc.org.

Wages Double Standard

The Fair Pay Commission’s recent pay rise for award workers, the lowest in ten years, is below the rate of inflation and will lead to a real wages cut for more than one million workers.

Contrast this with the Federal Remuneration Tribunal’s decision to award a 6.7% adjustment to the reference job point used by Members’ of Parliament to deliver their annual pay increases and the double standard is breathtaking.

Award workers will receive a pay rise of between \$5 and \$10 a week.

Members’ of Parliament will receive a pay rise of \$168 per week.

It’s enough to seek an automatic renaming of the Commission who sets the minimum wage.

ACTU research shows that the Federal Minimum Wage (FMW) has declined to just 63% of average weekly earnings, after tax, from the pay commission’s decision.

“It is insulting that in a time of strong economic growth that the low paid should fail to receive a real wage increase and that their living standards should decline relative to the rest of the community,” said ACTU President Sharan Burrow.

“The Prime Minister plays chicken little with his election rhetoric warning business that, if elected, a Rudd Government will take us all back to a centralised wage fixing system,” says CPSU State Secretary Karen Batt.

“He forgets to mention that his own wage increases are delivered by such a system.”



Veronica “Lani” Barnett, CPSU’s Indigenous Branch Section active member

Who Gets the Biggest Tax Cut?

New research that models all of the income tax changes since 1996 shows that average workers have fared far worst under the Howard Government while high income earners have benefited the most.

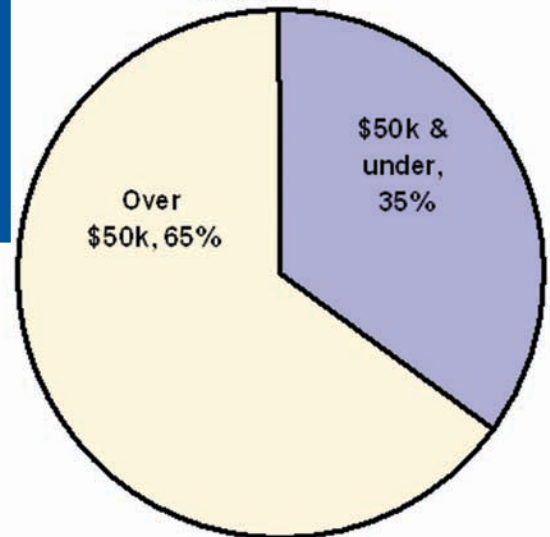
Research shows that workers on average wages got just \$23 a week in tax cuts while high income earners got \$140 a week - a tax cut that was six times higher.

Low and middle income taxpayers have received only around one third (35%) of the value of the tax changes since 1996 while those on higher incomes received nearly double this share (65%).

The modelling takes into account all of the Federal Government's income tax changes since 1996.

The Government's tax changes seem weighted against average working Australians.

Taxpayer share of tax cuts
1996-2008



Mining Myths Debunked on AWA's

Visiting Canadian economist Dr Jim Stanford debunks the myth that AWA individual contracts are somehow a necessary part of Australia's mining boom.

The report shows that productivity actually declined in Australian mining since the introduction of AWA's.

It also indicates that getting rid of AWA's - as Labor Party Leader Kevin Rudd proposes - will not undermine future investment in mining projects.

Key findings of the report are:

- * There is no empirical evidence that AWA's in the mining industry have altered fundamental labour practices - compensation, hours of work, productivity, and unit labour costs - with wages growing just 6% over a five year period to 2006.

Wages paid per employed worker currently

average about \$72,000 per worker with the amount of new hiring in the industry helping to keep down average wage levels.

ABS data indicates that average labour productivity in Australian mining has in fact declined since the introduction of AWA's.

- * Mining profits have increased to record levels, generating extremely high profit rates, solely because of an unprecedented increase in global mineral prices, which have risen by two-thirds since 2003.

- * A diminishing share of mining profits are being reinvested in new projects, even under the AWA regime - partly because of resource constraints and other factors.

There is no credible case that future mining investments would be undermined by the elimination of AWA's. Just 45 percent of before-tax profits are being reinvested in new

capital projects - a notable decline from the reinvestment rate of 2003-04, before AWA's were introduced.

The notion that incremental changes in the industrial relations environment (and hence, possibly, in labour costs) would send investors fleeing from the country is not believable.

Australian mining firms are currently reporting rates of return on shareholder equity ranging between 35 and 70 percent per year and it would take immense and unfavourable changes for miners to walk away from the possibility of earning these profit rates.

Full report available at: <http://www.actu.asn.au/Campaigns/YourRightsatWork/YourRightsatWorknews/BanonAWAindividualcontractswillnothurtminesnewresearch.aspx>

Action Needed on Family Leave for All

New research by the National Foundation for Australian Women shows 76% of Australians support a national system of paid maternity leave and that 85% agreed that 'More needs to be done in Australia so that mothers can spend more time with their newborn babies'.

Improving maternity leave encourages women to participate in the workforce and has not been a disincentive to employ women.

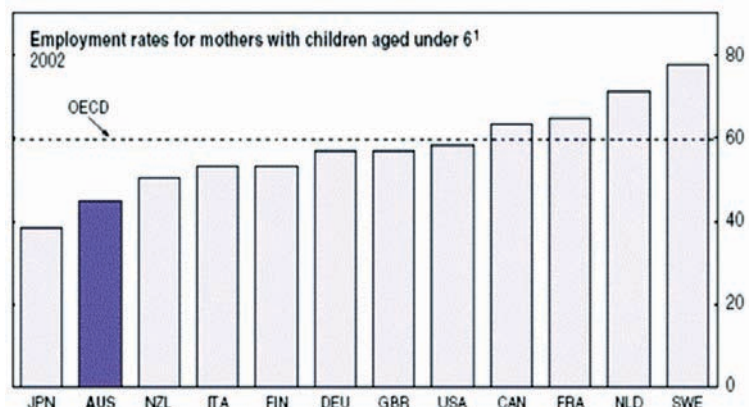
Since the unions' 1979 Test Case on (unpaid) Maternity Leave, women's workforce participation has increased from 46% to 66%* (*ABS 6202.0.55.001 Table 18).

Within the Victorian Public Sector women make up the majority of employees in more

than 73% of agencies and enjoy 14 weeks paid and up to 7 years unpaid parental leave amongst a raft of additional family friendly entitlements

However, despite these improvements Australia still lags in employment rates for mothers with young children when compared to other OECD countries.

On the issues that matter for working families the Federal Government must provide a national system of Govt-funded 14 weeks paid maternity leave & two weeks paid paternity leave with a right for parents to request secure part time work or flexible working hours until their children are at school the research concludes.



Structure Sound at Blue Rock Dam

"This is the most rewarding job I've ever had" says Paul Lothian, Blue Rock Dam's Senior Reservoir Keeper and long-time CPSU member.

"No other job has been able to sustain my interest like this one."

"Monitoring structural integrity and security of this and the other Latrobe storage dams," says Paul, "from operational and maintenance duties, maintaining recreational areas, monitoring the quality of the water, catchment management, we do everything."

Paul's been living on-site with his family and fulfilling this role for Southern Rural Water for 11 years and has been in the Rural water industry since 1989.

His past employment as a tradesman in the automotive industry, work in the building trades and as a commercial seaman along with the training he has received on the job has put him in good stead for a job that can literally change overnight.

"We have to deal with floods, earthquakes and bush fires" says Paul, reflecting on a role that he acknowledges few have the nature to adapt to.

Luckily for SRW Paul is well qualified for the responsibility he carries.

"Because the job is so varied, and calls on such a large skills register, I'm pretty well-suited. Every day is a different day. There's always something on the go here."

Blue Rock Lake has a 54km shoreline and Paul along with the other members of the Headworks group are responsible for ensuring its protection.

"The integrity of the dam comes first and foremost, and we are required to closely monitor the dam structure. Damage to the dam wall could potentially have devastating consequences."



Paul Lothian

The recent floods in Gippsland saw Paul play a major role with flood routing duties at Cowwarr Weir on the Thomson River regulating the supply of water and minimising the impact on nearby properties.

"Floods are essentially what we train for and the recent ones around Glenmaggie were a challenge."

Southern Rural Water is responsible for the water supply across southern Victoria stretching from the Great Divide to the coast and it's the second largest of the five rural water authorities in Victoria.

Luckily, he enjoys support from the people of close-knit Willow Grove, his home town where he and his three sons are very involved in the local football and cricket clubs.

When he gets the chance, he takes his boat away on family holidays to the coast but ironically he's not able to use it on Blue Rock Dam, although limited boating is permitted.

Today, Paul is glad to mentor younger employees helping train them in the various aspects of Headworks duties. He is also the Headworks Group representative on the OH&S and the Employee Consultative Committees. The importance of communication is often underestimated, Paul says, and having always



been a union person (he's been with CPSU since 1989) he believes in helping others to fulfill their job in a supportive, safe environment.

"You can put all the technology you want in place, but at the end of the day we're still the eyes and ears on the ground."

That can't ever be replaced."

Southern Rural Water is soon to start a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement with workers having endorsed a package providing for a 4 percent pay rise each year over three years. This will roll-over our current agreement, effectively protecting employees from Work Choices.

'IMPACT' Campaign to Defend Irish Public Services



The Irish trade union IMPACT has launched a campaign to defend public servants, and the union has produced a campaign pack to help its members, often dismissed as "bureaucrats, pen-pushers, bean counters and file-pullers" (sounds familiar).

It provides information on how Irish public sector staff work hard to deliver more and better services to the people and communities they serve.

For more information on the campaign see www.qualitypublicservices

AWA's cut workers' pay – Govt Report

Typical Australians on AWA individual contracts earn 16% less than their counterparts on collective agreements a new Government report has found.

The study found a major pay gap between workers on AWA individual contracts and those on collective agreements.

Australia-wide, people employed on AWA individual contracts were paid a median of \$20.50 an hour - \$4 an hour less than workers on median Collective Agreement earnings.

The AWA pay gap is worse for women than it is for men, with female median AWA earnings almost 19% lower than that for women on collective agreements.

The study found that AWA's paid on average well below Collective Agreements in the manufacturing industry, construction, transport and storage, health and community services, property and business services and the 'personal and other services' industries.

It found the wages gap is wider among small businesses than it is for larger businesses.

Nurses on Strike in Fiji after Pay Talks Break Down

Members of the Fiji Nursing Association, an Affiliate of Public Services International (PSI), walked off their jobs at midnight on Tuesday 24 July after talks with Fiji's interim Public Service Minister broke down.

Since taking power in a coup last December, Fiji's military government has cut the wages of public servants and reduced the compulsory retirement age.

The nurses' demands are to reinstate wages to their previous level prior to the imposition of a 5% pay cut in March 2007.

For background information and to read PSI's letter of support to the Fiji Nurses, visit www.world-psi.org



What is NOW 'fair'?

What is now 'fair' about a workplace individual contract is to be decided by the Federal Government's new Workplace Authority Director in response to their dismal position in the latest polling.

Unfortunately this will not be a transparent process and is subjective.

An agreement is tested against the protected award conditions set in an Award that binds an employer.

It is important to be aware however that over the past few years the Federal Government has stripped many Award entitlements and most are now left with at best ten protected conditions.

Also, under the new 'fairness' test the Workplace Authority can consider the personal circumstances of the worker.

Employers can also find their way around the fairness test by claiming regional variations and particular labour market characteristics.

There is no practical avenue for a worker to appeal against a decision and there is no obligation on the Authority to check details provided by the Employer.

The ACTU has advice that indicates that the only way a worker can appeal the decision of the Workplace authority Director is to the High Court, an avenue out of reach for most workers.

Does this mean that a previously unemployed worker can earn less?

Does this mean that women and younger workers can be paid less?

In the past women's wages have suffered from concepts that their work is secondary and that women work for the extras.

The idea of equal pay for work of equal value is tossed away.

Furthermore, recently the Fair Pay Commissioner Prof. Harper said that when determining the minimum wage increases he will consider tax and welfare arrangements.

This undermines again the principles of a fair days pay for a fair days work.

Does this mean that the taxpayer subsidises the employers for not paying a proper wage?

The real truth about Work Choices and how 'fair' it is for women can be found in the latest research report from the What Women Want group.

Their independent research found that the gender gap has widened, that gender inequality was worse in part-time and casual employment and that wages growth in sectors where women work lags behind sectors where men work.

The WWW group also found that the gender gap is higher in Western Australia where there is the highest incidence of Australian Workplace Agreements.

The Report is damning of Work Choices and can be found on website www.nfaw.org.

Suzanne Hammond

CPSU Federal Women's Industrial Officer.

UNISON
Your Union Phone Company
VOX POP

CPSU Members talk to Public Perspective about UNISON, provider of discounted rates for home phones, internet and mobile phones...

Are you saving money with UNISON, compared to the company you were with previously?

Paul, DSE: "Yes, I definitely am. It's a significant difference, about \$15-\$20."

Becky, DHS: "Yes, I am. It's been a very recent change. So far, so good!"

Genevieve, DVC: "Yes I am, a little not a lot though."

Is there anything about UNISON that you think could be improved?

Paul, DSE: "No, I am quite happy. The change-over was painless, once I got on they were very friendly."

Becky, DHS: "No, All fine!"

Genevieve, DVC: "I do think broadband could be cheaper."

Would you recommend UNISON to CPSU members?

Paul, DSE: "Look, I would definitely. It's very efficient and I'm pleased with the service."

Becky, DHS: "A bit early to tell, so far so good though."

Genevieve, DVC: "Yes I would. In comparison with Telstra, it's much better."



Call **1800 UNISON** to compare your current bills with Unison rates and see how you can save. www.unisonmobile.com

Together we will win, says Jeff



Jeff Lawrence, the ACTU's Secretary Elect, says that the union movement must continue the campaign to defend workers' rights, whatever the result of the federal election.

Jeff Lawrence has led the LHMU, one of Australia's largest unions, since 1990 and during this time has steered it through an enormously challenging period of economic and social change.

The LHMU covers the most vulnerable and marginal employees – mainly in the service, contract, childcare, aged care and health industries.

At the LHMU, Jeff's leadership reversed the decline in membership, achieving modest growth against the wider trend, prior to the introduction of Work Choices.

Jeff is married to Judy Hill, an industrial relations and human resources consultant.

He became Secretary Elect of the ACTU in June and will replace Greg Combet as national leader of the union movement at the end of August.



Greg Mills in the refurbished Legislative Council.

Parliament's Gentle Enforcer

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He is also thankful that unlike some of his colleagues, he lives in an inner-city suburb where commuting isn't a real problem so the drives to and from work in the dead hours of the night aren't so onerous.

"It all depends on how you prepare yourself, how you set yourself up," says Greg of the sometimes unpredictable shifts.

"And having contingency plans in place for the stressful times," he adds.

Away from work, Greg relishes as many chances as he can get to spend time with his grandchildren, Benjamin (2 years) and Amy (3 months).

"I adore them; they're great grandkids. I spend as much time with them as I can. And I like being able to give their parents a bit of time out, so they can go to dinner or a movie or something – have a break."

However there is another passion of Greg's, which really shouldn't come too much as a surprise given his clear communication skills and

natural organisational aptitude.

"I'm a member of the Rugby League Referees Association", Greg reveals, "and I travel across the state most Saturday and Sundays to referee games."

"And when the Melbourne Storm play home games, I work on the interchange, making sure the players get on and off the bench," he adds.

What he likes most about that he says, with a hearty dose of humour, is "being able to tell where to go; getting them organised."

It's would seem its something he should have little problem in doing given his day job.

"I'm the first point of contact for the general public; for politicians and visiting dignitaries, and responsible for ensuring that security procedures are being followed to the letter."

"Security is a bit more stringent today," he says.

"I make sure all the rules get followed." And you wouldn't want to argue with this umpire about that.

Paris Escapes Jail . . .



Paris Clydesdale is currently a year 10 student from Elwood Secondary College who spent a week in Communications at CPSU. She was a great assistance in the office and CPSU wishes her all the best during her future studies.

"For the past week I've enjoyed coming to CPSU for my work experience. I was able to participate in the production of the journal and attend meetings with members. I got to see what it was like working with the Union and learned some valuable research and interview skills. On the final day I was taken on a short tour of Parliament House and assisted in the interview of a Victorian Parliamentary Attendant which I found an interesting experience. Parliament House was an exciting place to visit and all out I enjoyed my stay at CPSU."

Tertiary Scholarship Program Recipients



CPSU in conjunction with SGE Credit Union continues our tertiary scholarship program awarding \$750 per year again this year to support those members and their families attempting a suitable tertiary course with a demonstrated need.

The scholarship is awarded in two categories, one for members' children and the other for members' studies, with a total amount of \$750 each year for a maximum of 3 years to be awarded for each category.

Recipient Lana Todoskov is daughter of CPSU member Geoff Todoskov who has been with the sheriff's office for 17 years. Lana is in her first year of Arts/Law at Victoria University.

Lana tells Public Perspective that the scholarship will really help with the purchase of costly law books, with father Geoff agreeing that it will go a long way towards helping Lana in her education.

CPSU member Owen Hardidge, who has been working as a Clerk of Court for 3 years, but has recently taken leave without pay to finish his Law degree.

Owen has combined his study, undertaken at Monash University, with an Arts degree majoring in include Criminology & Criminal Justice, and History. Being interested in social issues, he seeks to pursue a career in which he can make real a difference to the community.



Above and below: Award recipients Owen Hardidge, and also Lana Todoskov with her parents Milly and Geoff, joined by Branch Council President Calvin Goodall and Councillor Liz Free, along with SGE representatives Melissa Bodycoat and Tina Ballos.

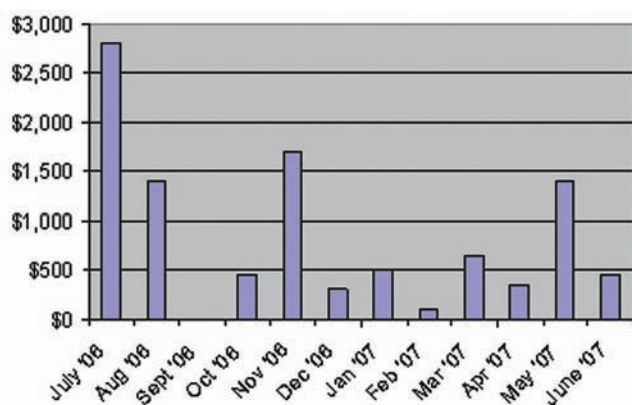


CPSU members along with all union members across Australia can make

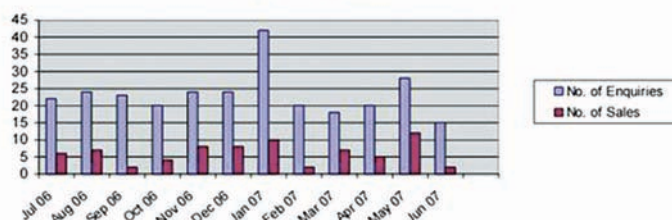


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CPSU Member Savings over last twelve months



Enquiries/Sales Over Past Twelve Months



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