



# PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE

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

[www.cpsuvic.org](http://www.cpsuvic.org)

## Celebrate 888 – 150 Years of Work, Rest and Play



In 2006, Victoria celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Eight Hour Day.

Arts Victoria together with major arts institutions and the Victorian union movement are funding a series of events over the course of next year to celebrate the anniversary.

CPSU is a proud sponsor of the project and our members on the 888 Project Team, Coordinator Leanne Shingles and Curator Sandy Kirby aim to deliver a range of events, with something for everyone.

Eight Hour Day exhibitions are planned at Melbourne Museum, the State Library, and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, and the Ian Potter Gallery at Melbourne University. Regional Victoria won't be missing out – an Eight Hour Day exhibition will travel to 9 regional centres over the course of the year.

Academic conferences on both the historic and contemporary significance of the Eight Hour Day are also planned.

Melbourne Workers Theatre will stage a major theatrical production *We Built This City*, featuring Mark Seymour from Hunters and Collectors, the Victorian Trade Union Choir, CFMEU members and a bobcat ballet.

The highlight of the events program is an Eight Hour Day rally, retracing the protest staged by stonemasons in 1856.

This event is internationally recognised as a significant victory for workers, which set the standard for the "working day", a concept that is just as relevant today as it was 150 years ago.

The program of events will be available at [www.8hourday.org.au](http://www.8hourday.org.au)



## Reporting the Tough Decisions

Overseeing the transition from typewriters to today's speech recognition technology, it would be fair to say that Liz Free (pictured above) – Senior Transcript Officer at the Victorian Government Reporting Service (VGRS) – has experienced considerable change within her professional career spanning over 20 years.

A self-confessed "Star Trek freak", she is perfectly suited to this high-tech industry, where accuracy and speed of output is paramount.

Liz is the main port of call for those wishing to access court transcripts – ranging from judges to students to members of the public – and finds the job rewarding, if not a little frustrating at times, due to some outsourcing requirements initiated by the previous government.

Yet it's a job that affords Liz the flexibility to care for family members and indulge in her passion for the Star Trek Voyager series, an original script from which she recently received as a birthday present.

"It is the best birthday present I have ever had, and it's signed by Kate Mulgrew" (who played Captain Kathryn Janeway).

Of all the series, Voyager is Liz's favourite for featuring a strong woman in charge, a character responsible for making tough decisions, and observes Janeway to be "a bit like the union's Branch Secretary in fact".

## Whale Rescuers



DSE Wildlife Officer and CPSU member Steve McDougall has acquired much experience over his 27 years working for various government agencies and units – experience which, as Biodiversity Rescue Manager for the Otways district has put him good stead for dealing with the risky business of whale entanglements. In June a trapped 13-metre humpback was cut free during a five-hour chase from Port Fairy to Warrnambool involving a fleet of inflatable rafts, boats, a light plane and helicopters. After the fleet containing most of the regions fishery and wildlife officers corralled the humpback closer to shore, a knife attached to the end of a two metre pole was used to cut ropes wrapped around its right pectoral fin – a technique developed and practised on a replica made of aluminium and tin. "The wrong attitude of a minority of the public in relation to wildlife can sometimes be frustrating", he says, but overall the public are very appreciative of the hard work he and his team do. In his spare time Steve continues to enjoy the wonders of the South West Victorian coastline while sailing in his small yacht.

# The Black Chicks Walking 'The Long Walk'

On a balmy Sunday last November, "The Black Chicks Walking", Patricia Sinclair-Atkinson, Jacqui Marion DHS employee and CPSU member and Merryn Edwards set out for an afternoon to support Michael on his Long Walk to Canberra.

We believed in what Michael was doing to make a difference in shaping the future for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous issues and it was something we strongly supported.

We discussed walking a few miles and we thought if we did more, well great.

On the day we arrived we met up with Michael on a dirty dusty road just outside Chiltern in soaring temperatures.

Meeting Michael was the turning point for me.

I not only felt the Emotion, Pain and Sorrow he was carrying, I saw it in his eyes.

I thought to myself, this is way too much pain for him to carry on his own and as Indigenous women we needed to do something.

I turned to my sisters and I said I am walking to Canberra, they replied, we are with you all the way.

To our surprise Julie Phillips arrived from Melbourne and we continued from there.

To see my cousin, and a brother, taking on such a powerful Journey for all Australians is something that has moved all four of us tremendously and therefore as future Indigenous leaders and women, we are extremely proud to continue the Journey of support this year.

We are four very different women from very diverse backgrounds, who gave up our time and our everyday essentials, walking with only one change of clothes between us.

We believe the "Long Walk" can make a difference; it is a way to stand up for our people who have suffered and are still suffering.

We each want to ensure that our Culture stays alive for all to appreciate in this wonderful Country, however the true history of our Country needs to be remembered and acknowledged.

Only then can we forgive, share, and appreciate each other for who we are and what our purpose is for the future of both Indigenous & Non Indigenous Australians.



*Jacqui Marion  
- A descendent  
of the Bidjarra  
people of  
southwest  
Queensland,  
Aughathella.*



*Patricia Sinclair/Atkinson, Merryn Edwards, Jacqui Marion and Julie Phillips.*

## Not all that Relaxed and Comfortable!

All workers have good reason to be worried and concerned, not relaxed and comfortable and this is especially true for women workers.

Now that the Federal Government has control of the Senate they were able to rush through Parliament two pieces of legislation that will dramatically affect working women.

The WorkChoices Legislation and the Welfare to Work Legislation when seen together threaten the wages, conditions and welfare of many women.

WorkChoices is a wholesale assault on the working conditions of Australians.

It single-handedly removes rights and entitlements that have been hard fought for by workers and their trade unions. It effectively takes everything bar a few bare minima and says to workers 'see if you can bargain anything back'.

It changes the way minimum wages are set, removes trade union rights to effectively represent members, it removes many achievements in equal pay and family friendly practices, and it removes unfair dismissal protection from most workers.

The Welfare to Work legislation puts many jobless single parents and people with disabilities onto lower payments and many will lose payments entirely for eight weeks if they refuse a minimum wage job, or have to leave a job.

Women represent 45 per cent of the Australian labour force.

Women are predominantly employed in retail trade, health and community services, education, hospitality, government and personal service.

Women are 60 per cent of casual workers and 71 per cent of part-time workers.

When we look at low wage workers we find that women dominate.

Because women have times out of the labour force for child bearing and caring responsibilities they are more reliant on the aged pension than men, have less superannuation, and are more likely to live in poverty in their older age.

Lone parents are predominately women and lone mothers tend to have younger children living with them.

The Howard Government in "WorkChoices" has removed the Minimum Wage setting process from the independent Australian Industrial Relations Commission to a new body titled the Fair Pay Commission.

The frequency of adjustment to the minimum wage by the new body is unclear and is subject to Ministerial intervention.

The Welfare to Work legislation puts single parents and people with disabilities on lower payments.

Single parents with school age children will have their weekly benefits cut.

Sole parent on unemployment benefits could lose their payments if they refuse to take a minimum wage job.

Taken together these changes will affect the whole of the workforce in a race to the bottom.

Women workers have a lot to lose – women are more reliant on a fair and just welfare and industrial relations regulatory system however women must remain active and organised to maintain conditions and make sure that our sisters and the most vulnerable of our workforce don't suffer under these harsh policies.



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# Quality Public Services Day

Public sector unions around the world joined together to demand an end to extreme poverty and hunger.

Many unions made this "Quality Public Services Day", linking access to public health, education, water and sanitation services as the foundations for defeating hunger and disease.

Actions took many forms, some on the streets, and others more directly with governments.

The pictures tell the story, millions of people joining together to demand a better world.

Enter this link into your Internet browser to view photos ([www.whiteband.org/PressCenter/photo\\_album](http://www.whiteband.org/PressCenter/photo_album)).



PSI [Public Services International] is calling for the protection of public services under the General Agreement on Trade in Services, demanding that recognition be given to the importance of governments retaining democratic control of these essential services. [www.world-psi.org/GCAP](http://www.world-psi.org/GCAP)

## The Cruellest Environmental Cuts of All

On 23 October 2005 the Bracks Government advised CPSU of its intent to slash 100 jobs from the Land Stewardship and Biodiversity Group (LSB) of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Working to ensure the environmental sustainability for the future health of all Victorians, LSB has prime responsibility for a number of key environmental areas including national parks, coastal and alpine regions, forests, Landcare and catchment management.

The Government claims that the proposed cuts are necessary to fund initiatives such as the Commonwealth Games, yet with a reported budget surplus of around \$800 million dollars for 2005/06 year, this claim is clearly unjustified.

The proposed \$6 - \$7 million in 'savings' flies in the face of the Premier's assertion that "I am making environmental sustainability a priority for our government" (Our Environment Our Future, April 2005) and will have a dramatic impact upon Victoria's capacity to protect, maintain and enhance its environment.

Not surprisingly all Executive Officer positions seem immune from these proposed cuts.

CPSU and LSB staff are calling on the Premier and Deputy Premier (Minister for Environment) to show some political leadership by putting an immediate stop to any proposed staff cuts and to increase the quantum of on-going resources dedicated to this vital area.

## A Living Nightmare Awaits Working Families

The final passage of the Government's amended WorkChoices laws through Parliament will make the Federal Government's industrial relations dream a living nightmare for Australian workers and their families.

The clear goal of the Government's new workplace law is to boost the profits of big business at the expense of the basic rights and living standards of working Australians.

These are unjust and unwarranted new laws that will hurt the most vulnerable workers and reduce the job security and living standards of all Australian workers and their families.

The Government has made 337 amendments to try and paper over the flaws

in the 'WorkChoices' legislation since it was released to the public just a month ago.

But not one of these amendments alters the fact that the laws will remove even the most basic workplace rights and protections for millions of Australian workers.

For more than 100 years Australia has had an industrial relations system that has given working people a share of the benefits of economic prosperity when times are good and ensured that there are decent protections for people when times get tough.

This is the system the Federal Government's new workplace laws will destroy.

All ten million working Australians will be badly affected by these new laws.



Rod Spence Corrections Officer and Prison Officers Association of Australasia (POAA) outgoing President, presents a cheque for \$20,000 to Secretary Greg Combet and President Sharan Burrow to assist the ACTU's Rights at Work Campaign.



CPSU Staff participated as "TEAM UNION" in this year's 'round the bay in a day' bike ride taking our message in an relevant way reaching 10,000 participants over 210 gruelling kms.

# Affinity Program Successfully Launched

The newly launched Affinity Program between our two organisations is about directing financial benefits exclusively to our union members.

SGE Credit Union and CPSU's history are strongly entwined in Victoria dating back to the late 50's.

SGE Credit Union was established in Victoria by union members in response to public servants being denied loans/finance by the banks.

Former VPSA President Norm Banner and CPSU Media & Communications Manager Julian Kennelly currently sit on the 7 member SGE Board with officials from the Public Service Association of NSW and the Health Services Union.

When CPSU members take up products with SGE Credit Union, they will receive:

- 6.74% p.a\* / 6.76%pa\*\* home loan
- 10% discount on Insurance Products
- Access to all of SGE's products & services
- NO application fees on mortgages & no monthly account keeping fees
- 4% discount on overdraft rate with a special co-branded Visa Card
- Financial Solutions Consultants available to meet with members

CPSU's Workplace Reps can organise for SGE's Business Development Officers or Financial Solutions Consultants to visit with them or come into the union.

Contact:

- Melissa Bodycoat [BDR] on 0400 437 942 or e-mail [melissab@sgecu.com.au](mailto:melissab@sgecu.com.au)
- Fiona Dunne [FSC] on 0409 822 212 or e-mail [fdunne@sgecu.com.au](mailto:fdunne@sgecu.com.au)
- SGE Credit Union Direct on 1300 364 400 or visit [www.sgecu.com.au](http://www.sgecu.com.au)

## Credit Union Affinity Program a Clear Favourite



'Point of Call', the short priced favourite took out CPSU's & SGE Credit Union's 'Member Affinity Program' Class 3 handicap at the Victorian Trade Union Race Day held at Cranbourne Racecourse in Melbourne during the Spring Racing Carnival.

## TAC Staff the Last to be Told

More than 700 State Government employees have had their Christmas plans thrown into complete chaos following the shock announcement by the Government of a "Feasibility Study" [sic] to investigate the possible relocation of TAC headquarters to Geelong.

More than an hour following this announcement to the public and the Geelong media, TAC management were given the approval to inform staff who were finally addressed about the Government's plans.

### "Utter contempt"

Staff immediately expressed their outrage at the lack of consultation and utter contempt with which we have been treated by walking off the job and two subsequent rallies have included lunchtime visits to the offices of the Premier and Responsible Minister seeking explanations and to protest the potential dislocation of TAC services.

Client groups are already coming out expressing their dismay at this decision.



*If you move TAC - you're a bloody idiot Steve!*