

JANUARY-  
MARCH  
2021

# RED TAPE

## LOCKED OUT

How PSA members  
held back COVID-19  
in NSW prisons

## BURNING ISSUES

What did the  
Government learn  
from Black Summer?

PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF NSW/CPSU NSW

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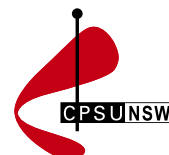
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From the General Secretary Stewart Little

# UNJUST REWARDS FOR HEROIC EFFORTS

**Keeping COVID-19 out of gaols is just one reason our members deserve better.**

Unlike the vast majority of corrective services operations worldwide, the NSW prison system is, at the time of press, free of COVID-19. Likewise, our Youth Justice facilities.

These are just two examples of where our members have been let down by a State Government denying them a pay rise.

As 2020 began, with the east coast of the country in the grip of ferocious bushfires, we had only an inkling of the next calamity around the corner. In the ensuing weeks, small stories in the international pages of newspapers about a virus in a Chinese city few of us had heard of suddenly started gaining more prominence, moving to the front page as the country suddenly experienced its first cases of COVID-19.

The very way we interact with each other came under the spotlight. Handshakes were out, with close contact limited to those in your own household. Packed trains in rush hour went from an uncomfortable annoyance to a potential disease spreader. Buzzing workplaces emptied out, with ideas exchanged over Zoom calls rather than around a table.

But close contact is not always possible to avoid and not everyone can work at home. In the 38 prisons and six Youth Justice centres around the state, detainees and Prison Officers are up close to each other 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If there was a perfect place for a pandemic to spread, a prison or a Youth Justice centre would be a prime candidate.

Overseas, we saw the results of poor planning. In the US, testing did not commence until April, resulting in thousands of dead inmates and tens of thousands of infections. In Britain, where the Conservative Government toyed with a Darwinian idea of “letting the virus

rip”, at least 20 Prison Officers have died. All over the world, as deaths mounted, offenders were let back into society long before their terms were completed.

In NSW, it is a different story. Our members in the state’s correctional facilities were on the front foot, making sure the pandemic remained outside the walls. And at the time of press, they had succeeded, with NSW prisons and Youth Justice centres COVID-free.

Working in tandem with the Department, PSA members in correctives were part of a team based at the prison system’s headquarters, monitoring the state of NSW gaols daily. In the meantime, a hospital was set up for any cases and new arrivals quarantined. You can read more about the absolute professionalism of our members in the feature on page 26.

It is telling that even the three privately run jails in the state were party to Corrective Services NSW’s operations to keep COVID-19 out. As we have

discovered since the fire season began way back in 2019, public disasters require public solutions.

The Federal Government’s longstanding efforts to deregulate aged care saw COVID-19 spread like wildfire through these facilities, populated by the people most at risk from the pandemic. Outsourcing hotel security led to hot spots developing in Victoria. An outsourced app proved all but useless at contact tracing.

The State Government needs a well-resourced public sector. The decision in 2020 to award the state’s public servants, the very people whose work kept COVID-19 numbers low, a 0.3 per cent pay rise is a slap in the face.

For years the PSA/CPSU NSW has fought outsourcing and job cuts and we will fight this backward step on wages. We have proven our worth to the Government. It is time the Government acknowledged our efforts in return. ■







# THE LUNACY OF A WAGE CUT

**A minuscule pay rise doesn't just hurt us, it also harms the economy.**

**P**SA General Secretary Stewart Little has slammed the NSW Government's decision to cut public sector wages, describing it as "economic idiocy".

In its November Budget, the NSW Government reduced the maximum public sector wage increase from 2.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent a year. The wage cut comes after the Government pushed for a complete freeze on public sector wages, resulting in a 0.3 per cent increase being awarded by the Industrial Relations Commission.

"The Treasurer has absolutely disrespected NSW public sector workers who stopped COVID-19 in its tracks," Mr Little said. "The most powerful economic stimulus the Treasurer has is NSW's own workforce. They spend what they earn directly back into their communities."

The NSW Government is the biggest employer in Australia and accounts for one in 10 NSW jobs. Cutting the wages and conditions of NSW public sector workers means lower growth, reduced economic activity and a slower recovery in an already struggling economy.

The 2.5 per cent wage rise for public servants would have been a significant stimulus measure that put money in the pockets of people who spend it in their local communities.

Cutting public sector salaries will further dampen economic activity already reeling from the Morrison Government's decision to wind back the JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments.

In regions such as Orana and the Far West, one in five jobs is funded by the NSW Government, so the wage cut will fall disproportionately on rural and regional communities, where public sector jobs are a crucial source of employment, income and spending. The economic activity generated by public sector wages sustains many businesses in regional communities, which will now suffer.

A public sector wage cut also falls hardest on women who comprise the majority of the NSW public sector.

According to Dr Jim Stanford, Economist and Director of the Centre for Future Work, increasing public expenditure, including public sector wages, is vital during the pandemic as economic activity will not suddenly "snap back" to

pre-pandemic levels on its own. In his article *The Macroeconomic and Fiscal Consequences of Public Sector Wage Freezes in NSW* Dr Stanford writes:

"The State Government's top priority should be mobilising maximum available resources into the battle against the pandemic and its economic and social consequences. This must include allocating resources to broader health care functions (including hospitals, aged care services, testing, tracing and more); investments in capital projects; expansion of public services; and normal wage increases paid to workers who perform all of those vital functions."

The NSW Government's argument is that taking money away from public sector pay cheques and putting it into construction and infrastructure spending will create jobs. This argument does not hold up to scrutiny.

About 0.97 direct jobs are generated for every \$1 million spent on building projects, according to ABS data. Conversely, 1.79 direct jobs are created for every \$1 million spent by consumers. So if the NSW Government wanted to create jobs, it should put the money into pay packets. ■





## A NEW START NEEDS YOUNG WORKERS

**Young workers will be vital for the post-COVID world.**

**R**ecent decades have seen public policy favour older Australians, with young people shut out of the property market and disproportionately represented in insecure, casual employment. Free tertiary education exists only in the memories of Baby Boomers and early Generation Xers, with a degree now often issued hand-in-hand with a massive debt. The TAFE system that for years sent many people into well-paying trades is being eroded in favour of inferior private operators. And younger people are the ones who will have to live with the country's inaction on climate change.

The NSW recovery from the ravages of COVID-19 gives us time to remedy this imbalance, with PSA/CPSU NSW members playing a vital role in protecting the interests of younger people in the state.

It is our members in schools, and subsequently TAFE and university, who are preparing children and young adults for a dramatically different labour market. And it is our members in Youth Justice who work to put young offenders back on track if they take a wrong path early on.

In National Parks, State Forests and in areas such as the environment protection and climate change authorities, it is our members working – often against government indifference – to preserve the state's environment and ameliorate global warming.

Our members need the State and Federal Governments to get on board. More should be spent on our schools to get students better prepared for a job market few of us would now recognise. Universities have lost billions as the international student market plummets, so it is time for Canberra and Macquarie Street to invest more in our excellent institutions, as well as cease their assault on TAFE.

There needs to be more spent – and more people hired – to improve the environment. The regions have done it tough with drought and bushfires, as well as experiencing a huge drop in tourism. Getting more young workers in regional jobs, redressing environmental decay, will not only improve the land, it will lead to

more spent in regional economies and stop the effects of ageing populations in smaller towns.

After a frankly awful 2020, this year offers NSW a chance to reset how things are done. And our members working with younger people will play a vital role in this change. ■





# FLEX TIME IS A RIGHT – EVEN AT HOME

**Workplace flexibility does not depend on your location.**

**T**he PSA has warned NSW Government employers to stop using the pandemic as an excuse to change flexible work arrangements.

Some members have reported supervisors attempting to change the workplace rules including:

- suspending flex time entitlements
- directing employees to work only seven hours per day
- requiring written approval prior to an employee working more or less than seven hours per day
- only allowing flex time to accrue when a supervisor is present
- requiring colleagues to cover duties
- dictating starting and finishing times separate to operational requirements.

The PSA is concerned local managers are developing policy on the run and arbitrarily varying work arrangements, including those that apply to flex time.

The Industrial Relations Commission has rejected previous attempts to artificially limit access to flex. In a 2017 case involving the NSW Police, Commissioner Murphy said, “It is not open to individual supervisors to impose additional arbitrary limitations on an employee’s right to accrue flex leave.”

“There is no rule precluding employees from accessing flex leave when working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said General Secretary Stewart Little.

Members who are denied flex time should seek a manager’s written clarification. If they have concerns about the response, or are unable to obtain one, they should contact the PSA on 1300 772 679. ■



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From the Assistant General Secretary Troy Wright

## WORKING FOR US ALL

Our members outside the state system are toiling hard for NSW.



**T**wo of my recent trips as Assistant Secretary of the CPSU State Branch have been to see members in two of the state's three private prisons, where I am constantly reminded of the extraordinary – and risky – work these people do.

The very weekend after our visit to Parklea for a Hindu Diwali celebration, two Prison Officers were seriously assaulted.

Your union will never shy away from the fact it believes the incarceration of inmates is a responsibility of the state. In an ideal world our members in Parklea and Clarence Correctional Centre would have the same employer – and pay and conditions – as those in the public sector.

Likewise, disability services, electricity generation and the land title service should still be in the hands of the state and that Forestry Corp should remain so.

However, we work and live in a neoliberal world where many of the roles

long played by government have been outsourced to private providers. It is our role, as the union representing these workers, to make sure the worst excesses of the free market system are curbed. Prison Officers should not be placed at greater risk in the workplace simply because their pay cheque is issued by an outsourcing company rather than the NSW Government.

It is the CPSU NSW's job to negotiate via the Federal Fair Work system on behalf of our members who are not employed directly by the NSW Government. This is an industrial relations system that's become overwhelmingly stacked in favour of big business and so is often incapable of protecting working Australians.

At the moment, our members in disability services are renegotiating their employment conditions. Since the State Government outsourced its disability services responsibilities, our members in the sector have been on Copied State Awards that preserve the conditions they

worked under while state employees. As these Copied State Awards expire, these employees, performing absolutely vital work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable people in the state, will need to renegotiate their conditions. And, as you

**WE BELIEVE INCARCERATING  
INMATES SHOULD BE A  
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE**

can imagine, the employers aren't lining up to give staff even better conditions. And that is where we come in.

As they enter negotiations with their myriad employers, workers in disability services will need a strong union behind them. Luckily, the CPSU NSW is working for them – and for all members outside the NSW Government. ■



# TIME TO SWITCH FOCUS

Performance reviews enable us to look at our employers.

Performance reviews are often seen as a one-sided conversation where employers and managers get to say what they do or don't like about an employee's performance. However, employers have a responsibility to perform, too. The NSW Public Service Commissioner makes it clear that driving improved performance is a joint responsibility of the employee and the employer.

Here are some of the responsibilities employers owe to their employees through the performance management process:

- set clear expectations
- guide and review employee performance
- develop employee capabilities
- improve employee performance
- resolve unsatisfactory employee performance
- evaluate and strengthen practices.

Performance management systems are not about paperwork and process. They can have a material impact on the wellbeing

once every six months during a review. There needs to be regular two-way conversations that are positive, meaningful and immediate

- Evidence and examples of performance: employers need to provide examples of good performance and specific evidence of any shortfalls
- A fair and equitable process for managing unsatisfactory performance: all agencies should have a detailed policy for managing alleged unsatisfactory performance
- Proper support for employees: an employee alleged to be performing unsatisfactorily must be informed of the relevant processes and their rights. They should be supported with good supervision and counselling.

Performance management and reviews can be contentious issues and members are encouraged to seek advice from their PSA delegate where there is perceived unfairness or non-compliance with policy or the application of the *Government Sector Employment Act*. ■



of employees and the awarding of annual pay increments. That's why the PSA believes all NSW agencies should adopt the following practices to improve their performance management systems:

- Employees should receive training on the performance management system, how it works and what to expect
- Employees must have an up-to-date role description so they know what their performance is being assessed against. Without one, there is a danger that an employer will expect a higher degree of achievement than is reasonable at the employee's classification
- Discussions about employee performance should not happen

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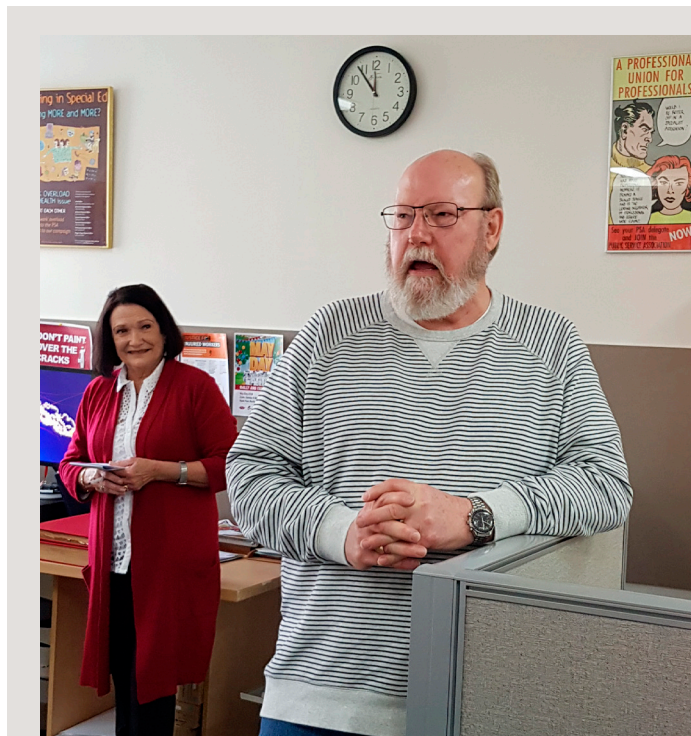
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Note: Work related matters must be referred to PSA industrial staff in the first instance. They will advise if a lawyer is required.





## VALE MARTIN STOTT

The PSA/CPSU NSW is saddened to learn of the death of long-time Librarian Martin Stott.

Mr Stott came to the union in 1986 as a Delegate from the State Library. Originally planning to review the union's Research Library, then return to Macquarie Street, he ended up staying in PSA House for 32 years, retiring in 2018.

For many visitors to PSA House, particularly before the rise of the smartphone, Mr Stott provided a space for them to check emails against a soothing backdrop of ABC Classic FM and a well-stocked jar of sweets.

"Martin was a long-time key part of the union, with a wide knowledge of industrial relations issues," said General Secretary Stewart Little. "His work was critical in the Librarians and Schools pay equity cases."

"He passed on his great wealth of knowledge to me and was a great friend and colleague," said Arundathie Wijesinghe, who worked alongside Mr Stott for 10 years. "He always assisted PSA staff with their questions and was very close to everyone he worked with." ■

## FUND CORRUPTION FIGHTERS PROPERLY

**PSA members at the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) are Champions of the State, exposing corrupt conduct and protecting the public interest.**

**T**heir role investigating and exposing corruption has earned them the respect of the public, and the ire of many public officials.

Despite the public's support, our state's corruption fighters have been forced to beg for additional funding every year to complete their vital investigative work and to conduct public hearings.

PSA General Secretary Stewart Little said it was time to fund ICAC properly so it can focus on investigating wrongdoing instead of trying to find annual budget savings.

"Every year budgetary pressure sees ICAC go cap in hand to the Premier for supplementary funding," Mr Little said. "Without this cash it is hamstrung in its ability to sniff out corruption or run multiple investigations."

"Independent and consistent funding, allocated at arm's length from the Government, is needed urgently. Keeping NSW corruption-free shouldn't be treated as a line item in the budget, it is a core service we need. ICAC cuts are great news for corruption in the same way park ranger cuts are great news for bushfires."

Mr Little's call for a new funding model follows

comments by both ICAC's Chief Commissioner and the NSW Auditor-General on the impact budget cuts have on the independence and effectiveness of the corruption watchdog.

ICAC warned in December 2019 that it would need to cut 31 employees – or a quarter of its staff to achieve the Government's required budget savings. Chief Commissioner Peter Hall said these cuts would "have an immediate and serious effect on the commission's frontline services, and therefore its ability to fight corruption".

In her October 2020 review of the funding arrangements of NSW integrity agencies including ICAC, NSW Auditor-General Margaret Crawford said the current funding model contained "several areas of

ambiguity" and "threats to the independence of the integrity agencies" due to the role of the cabinet in signing off on funding allocations.

Ms Crawford wrote that when ICAC had sought an increase in funding, its proposals had been "rejected without reasons being provided".

"There are no formal mechanisms available to ICAC to question or challenge these decisions," she wrote. "The process available to ICAC to request additional funding outside the annual budget creates further risks to its independence." ■





## FEES BURIED AS FOSSILS COME BACK ON DISPLAY

PSA members Hannah Smyth (left) and Lisa Loader stand in the Australian Museum's newly renovated exhibition hall among several displays at the Tyrannosaurus Rex exhibition. The museum, the oldest in the country, opened its doors last November after a year-long closure. In good news for potential visitors, the museum has scrapped its general admission fee.

## PSA SCORES OLYMPIC WIN

**A** world record rugby league crowd at the 1999 Grand Final. Cathy Freeman lighting the cauldron and her 400m gold medal triumph at the Olympics. Ian Thorpe and the Australian 4x100m relay team's win over the USA. John Aloisi's penalty in 2005 to send the Socceroos to the World Cup.

The Olympic Park precinct has been the setting for many great victories. Now the PSA can add its name to the winners' list after a successful lobbying campaign on behalf of members at the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA).

The NSW Government introduced legislation to dismantle SOPA, transferring the entertainment and sporting facilities to Venues NSW and

depriving SOPA of its income. SOPA employees would also be transferred, risking their status as Government employees.

The PSA lobbied Parliamentarians on the impact these changes would have on SOPA and its staff. The Upper House stopped the Government's plan and removed SOPA from the proposed legislation, so it will retain control over its income-generating assets and its staff will remain government employees.

PSA Industrial Officer Shane Howes said Parliament's decision showed how effective the union is when fighting for its members.

"Our union took the fight to the floor of the NSW Parliament," Mr Howes said. "Thanks must go to our SOPA workplace Delegates Tony Nesbitt and Ross Stirling who worked tirelessly for this result."



"What the PSA has achieved through its successful lobbying for amendments to this bill is remarkable," said Mr Nesbitt. "It was a textbook case of the PSA truly engaging with members." ■





## PSA READY TO FIGHT JOB LOSSES IN TRANSPORT FOR NSW

### Evolving Transport restructure plans are due to be released.

**I**t has been an uncertain start to the year for the 4000 employees of Transport for NSW (TfNSW). While most people have enjoyed a well-deserved summer break, the staff at NSW's lead transport agency are waiting to find out whether their job has been abolished and whether they need to apply for a new one.

The euphemistically named "Evolving Transport" plan proposes massive changes to nearly every section of the organisation, including Corporate Services and Transport Shared Services, Payroll Personnel, Finance and Assets, Workplace Services and Property.

Hundreds of jobs are set to be cut or redesigned with most affected employees required to reapply for any position.

With the final plans for the redesigned agency due in March, the PSA is gearing up for a major campaign to save the jobs

of members and to stop any attempt to downgrade workers' wages and conditions.

"Transport is required by law to consult with the PSA on these changes," said Mr Nathan Bradshaw, Industrial Manager of the union's Transport Cluster. "That's why we have encouraged all our members to put in submissions detailing how the proposals will impact them."

"The PSA team has conducted more than 100 teleconferences and meetings all around the state, mobilising our membership and explaining how they can influence the final job designs. Our members have generated hundreds of submissions which Transport is required to consider and respond to in writing.

"And if Transport does not treat this consultation seriously, if they don't respond promptly to the concerns of our members, then we have cause to take industrial action.

"Some members have already been placed into new positions and we have

managed to secure pay increases for them. But some employees will find their position abolished and a similar role will be externally advertised, forcing them to reapply to keep their job."

The restructure follows the merging of the Roads and Maritime Service (RMS) into the new "super-agency" TfNSW in 2019. When the legislation was going through the NSW Parliament, the PSA successfully lobbied the crossbenchers to include a jobs guarantee for RMS employees until 2023.

"The jobs guarantee for former RMS staff means their jobs cannot be changed or redesigned unless the PSA agrees to it. And we will only agree if it means an improvement in pay and conditions," Mr Bradshaw said.

"Other Transport employees are more at risk and there is potential for job losses and redundancies. The NSW Government has said this reorganisation is not about cuts and has given a commitment there will be no job losses in regional NSW. The PSA stands ready to hold them to this promise." ■



# IN UNITY: BARGAINING CONTINUES

**Australian Unity has agreed to the CPSU NSW's demand to safeguard employment conditions until a new Enterprise Agreement comes into force.**

**W**hen the Home Care Service of NSW was privatised and its employees transferred to Australian Unity, award conditions were protected for five years or until a new Enterprise Agreement was approved. With COVID-19 delaying the bargaining process, there was a risk the five-year protection would expire and wages could be cut.

The CPSU NSW was never going to let this happen. It negotiated an agreement with Australian Unity to keep the current conditions until a new enterprise agreement is finalised.

Mr Thane Pearce, Manager of the CPSU NSW's National System Team, said the agreement allows the union to keep negotiating to get the best deal for members.

"It was important to have this contingency in place if the negotiations went beyond the five-year deadline. Our members can be confident they won't experience a shock to their entitlements and that a new enterprise agreement will soon be in place securing their rights." ■

## CPA RESTRUCTURE HEADS TO FAIR WORK

**T**he CPSU NSW is taking the Cerebral Palsy Alliance (CPA) to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) over a restructure which could lose some members up to \$20,000 in salary. The CPA has replaced Team Leaders in its group homes with lower-paid House Managers, despite both roles having substantially the same duties.

As former public sector employees, Team Leaders had their pay and conditions protected for five years or until an enterprise agreement is approved. They were also given a two-year employment guarantee.

Shortly after the employment guarantee expired, CPA created the new House Manager position with a lower rate of pay and invited Team Leaders to apply for it.

In response, the CPSU NSW took the dispute to the FWC arguing Team Leader entitlements are protected and cannot be ended by the restructure.

The hearings concluded on December 11, 2020 with final submissions from all parties. At the time of press, the dispute is still under consideration. ■



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# CHAOS AT CLARENCE

## Private prison operator Serco has employee entitlements in its sights.

Six months after private prison operator Serco started operating the new Clarence Correctional Centre (CCC), the attacks have started on the conditions of the workforce. As in the other private prisons it manages around the world, Serco sees a path to increased profits going through the entitlements of its employees.

Troy Wright, CPSU NSW Branch Assistant Secretary, said the behaviour of Serco towards its employees was not good enough.

"Serco is a multinational corporation, not a novice operating out of a car boot. Instead of proper consultation and negotiation; we are seeing rushed and improper announcements at staff meetings," he said. "We have made it clear to Serco that we expect the Award and any future enterprise agreement to be complied with, and we

will take action if they are not. We will have no hesitation pursuing the rights of our members in the Fair Work Commission."

Here are just some of the examples where the CPSU NSW has intervened on behalf of its members:

**Roster ructions** Without any consultation and in breach of its legal obligations, Serco attempted to implement a new roster introducing 11-hour shifts. The CPSU NSW intervened and insisted roster changes had to comply with the Award, including consulting with union representatives. After the secrecy surrounding this attempted roster change, CPSU NSW members have been



Prison Officers are up early, so CPSU NSW staff were, too, handing out breakfast rolls and talking to staff at Clarence Correctional Centre about why they should join their union.

asked to report any concerns to their union to ensure minimum breaks are provided, the distribution of shifts is equitable and all allowances are paid.

**Safety slowdown** Despite a flood of safety concerns being raised by members, Serco management failed to have Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) appointed at the prison. The requirement to elect HSRs is in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, and Serco's slow action demonstrates the lack of importance it attaches to employee safety. The CPSU NSW wrote to Serco demanding to know when and how it intends to meet its obligations under the Act.

**Bargaining backdown** Serco did a backflip and agreed to the CPSU NSW's demands to enterprise bargain after the union threatened to go to the Fair Work Commission.

The Prison Officers at the centre are currently employed on the Federal Modern Award, a woefully inadequate instrument never intended for this purpose and not used by any other centre in any other jurisdiction in the country. Enterprise bargaining is an opportunity to improve employee working conditions, including rostering, leave, allowances and salary. ■

# RIDE HIGHLIGHTS PRISON DANGERS



## POVB members hit the road to remember colleagues.

Prison Officers throughout NSW paused to remember the 12 staff killed in the state's prisons since 1842, as well as other members who have passed away in 2020.

Remembrance Day was marked by a 100-motorcycle ride from Brush Farm Academy, in Sydney's northwest, to the Geoffrey Pearce Correctional Centre at Windsor, to Lithgow Correctional Centre and finally on to Bathurst Correctional Centre. The Geoffrey Pearce Centre is named after an Officer who died in 1997 after being assaulted using a HIV-positive needle seven years earlier.

PSA General Secretary Stewart Little joined Corrective Services NSW Commissioner Peter Severin in a wreath-laying ceremony at Brush Farm. ■





## THREE CHAMPIONS: PSA MEMBERS AWARDED FOR BRAVERY

**POVB members risk their lives to rescue inmates.**

**T**hey say heroes run towards danger while everyone else just runs. In the early afternoon of June 12, 2020, a fire broke out in the Mary Wade Correctional Centre in Lidcombe. An inmate allegedly used the aluminium in a lunch tray to spark a flame in an electricity socket to set fire to a mattress. A ferocious fire began and ripped through the wing of the women's prison.

As thick smoke spread, three members of the Immediate Action Team unlocked a door to reveal the fire inside. Then they moved into the burning cell.

Video footage of the event captures the officers as they risk their lives to save two trapped inmates and to extinguish the fire.

The three PSA members – Andrew Boan, Fraser Leavasa and Geoffrey Ronayne – have been awarded the Commissioner's Commendation for Brave Conduct for their actions that day.

Days after the fire, the officers received a standing ovation from inmates and handmade greeting cards of praise and gratitude.

Mr Boan said a "human instinct" made

him move towards danger to save others. "We were thinking these are two human beings that need to be rescued. The whole cell had gone up – it was like an inferno."

Once in the cell the officers acted fast. "There was so much smoke you couldn't see anybody," said Mr Leavasa. "Then I saw an inmate run out of her cell and collapse." Mr Leavasa dragged her away from the fire to safety.

Geoffrey Ronayne remembers running into the burning cell after hearing screams. "You could just hear the panic. Whether she was saying anything or not, you could tell where she was and that she was distressed." Mr Ronayne found the inmate cowering in the shower and hauled her to safety.

Nicole Jess, Chairperson of the Prison Officers Vocational Branch, praised the bravery of the three officers.

"Every day members like Andrew, Fraser and Geoff confront danger while doing their job with dedication and professionalism. They deserve this honour and our whole union is proud of them," Ms Jess said.

Corrective Services NSW Commissioner Peter Severin described the actions of the three men as heroic.

"The officers maintained composure in the face of fire and the risk of serious injury, while also demonstrating courage and compassion," Commissioner Severin said. ■

## PRISON OFFICERS DESERVE BETTER

Police Officers, Paramedics and Firefighters are heroes.

They deal with criminals. They prevent crime. They administer medical treatment. They save lives. They fight fires.

NSW Prison Officers do the same. They deal with criminals. Give medical treatment. They put out fires. Sometimes they do all three in the one day. But the NSW Government refuses to classify them as emergency service workers in a cynical act that prevents them accessing more generous workers' compensation benefits.

Emergency services workers injured on duty get access to a range of benefits including payment of medical expenses, weekly compensation payments, lump sums for impairment and additional lump sums for pain and suffering. This is because they are exempt from the savage cuts to the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme introduced in 2012. ■



## SURVEY REVEALS HIDDEN COSTS OF HENRY DEANE BUILDING RELOCATION

**A PSA survey has revealed the hidden costs of the relocation of the Justice agencies from the Henry Deane Building (HDB) near Sydney's Central Station to new premises in Parramatta.**

The survey found eight in 10 (79 per cent) members will experience a significant increase in commuting costs. Even with the Opal Card's \$50 weekly cap, the cost of return trips to Parramatta Station will be in excess of \$2000 a year from most parts of Sydney.



Eight in 10 members (78 per cent) also said travel times will increase significantly with people living in the south or north of Sydney likely to experience the longest commutes. A round trip on public transport from Caringbah or Artarmon is expected to take nearly two hours. However, members using the T1 Western Line from Burwood to Blacktown are likely to enjoy a faster journey to work.

If given the option, 46 per cent would prefer to work from home and only three per cent want to move to the new location. The remaining 51 per cent prefer to stay at HDB.

The survey found 62 per cent of members believe consultation on the relocation has been inadequate.

Julie Bond, the PSA's Industrial Manager Justice, said the move is a significant change in the employment conditions of members.

"The Award requires the Department to consult the PSA on changes like this. That is why we conducted this survey, to get our members' views so we can let the Department know the proposed relocation's impact," Ms Bond said.

The relocation is scheduled to occur in late 2021. The new premises is described as an 'agile' work environment where laptops will be provided but no-one will have a set desk. ■

## PSA GETS SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS OUT OF POLICE HEADQUARTERS

**C**CTV surveillance cameras have been removed from the offices in NSW Police Headquarters (PHQ) after intervention by the PSA. The PSA became aware of the cameras

after members noticed them in a newly fitted-out floor's personal locker area.

Following complaints, the cameras were disabled, notice was given of their installation, and they were reactivated. Management claimed they were necessary to protect staff and assets.

On behalf of its members, the PSA

took the issue to the Industrial Relations Commission demanding they be removed. And within days, contractors arrived to pull the cameras out.

Roland Harris, Organiser in the PSA's Justice Team said the matter now appears to be finished.

"Claims they were needed for security just didn't hold up. The plan was to roll these fit-outs – including the cameras – across the entire building, so everyone would have been affected."

"The PSA has received congratulations from other PHQ employees, including senior police officers." ■

## COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS LISTENS TO THE PSA

**A** quick succession of three wins has improved the working lives of PSA members in Community Corrections.

The PSA and Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) recently agreed on a settlement for an ongoing dispute on meal allowances. Under the settlement, each member who made a one-day journey between September 2012 and September 2018 will be provided with 50 per cent of the allowance, while members who can provide evidence of the amount already paid will be paid the full outstanding amount of the allowance. This settlement will also be applicable for members in Non-Custodial Corrections who undertook a one-day journey in the same time period.

"This will be a fantastic outcome resulting in back pay for many members in Corrective Services," said PSA Industrial Officer Andrew Wright. "Wins such as this one are achievable because a union workplace is a stronger workplace."

The union also forced CSNSW to reinstate offers of Senior Community Corrections Officer (SCCO) roles to a number of applicants who had had their offers withdrawn.

In a letter to the PSA, Assistant Commissioner Sandy Crawford wrote, "CSNSW has considered your proposal to progress the ineligible applicants to the SCCO role once they have fulfilled the eligibility criteria. I am of the view that your proposal has merit and will subsequently be adopted by CSNSW in this instance."

Officers who commenced in the August and September 2016 classes will also be able to apply for progression to SCCO.

In addition, PSA delegates and industrial staff have consistently campaigned on the unacceptable workload levels in Community Corrections. The State Government has finally listened to concerns and allocated an extra \$33 million in funding to provide longer periods of supervision to a larger number of offenders deemed a medium or higher risk. The funding boost will create more than 140 new ongoing roles. ■



# THE STATE'S RADIO STARS

**Meet the essential Champions of the State working hard to help coordinate crime fighting in NSW.**

**P**olice Dispatchers are a vital cog in the war against crime. All over NSW, Police Dispatchers are communicating over the air to Police Officers, sending them to jobs in their communities.

"This is vital work, the state's ability to combat crime would be severely curtailed without our skills," said Bree Bell (pictured), who works at the Newcastle Radio Room. "Without us, NSW Police Officers would not get to crime scenes fast enough."

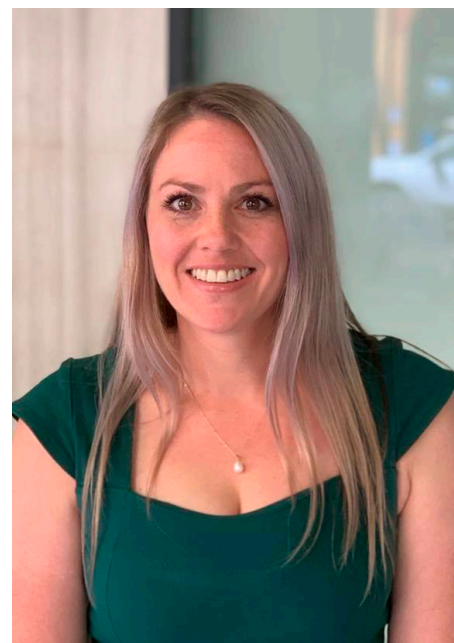
Crime doesn't sleep or take the Easter Long Weekend off, so the high-pressure

job involves rostering staff on 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with Dispatchers working shifts as long as 12 hours.

The past year and a half have been tough on these workers: the bushfires that gripped much of NSW involved extensive radio communication in high-stress environments and coordination of work such as police roadblocks. The intense pressure Police Dispatchers were under at this time and the harrowing situations they were dealing with over radio led some workers to develop trauma-related issues.

While COVID-19 transformed dining tables into desks and spare bedrooms into offices all over Australia, Police Dispatchers continued to come to their workplaces, performing an essential role for the state.

"We will always be there for the people of NSW," said Ms Bell. ■



## Exclusive Deals

**Did you know as a PSA Member you're eligible to receive exclusive<sup>1</sup> deals?**

### Home Loans<sup>1</sup>

- 0.10%p.a. discount off the Owner Occupied Standard Variable and Fixed Rate Home Loans
- 0.10% p.a. discount off the Investment Variable and Fixed Rate Home Loans
- \$250 loan approval fee waived for any Home Loan Product

### Personal and Car Loans<sup>1</sup>

- 1% p.a. discount off standard variable rate
- \$150 approval fee waived

### Low Rate Visa Credit Card<sup>1</sup>

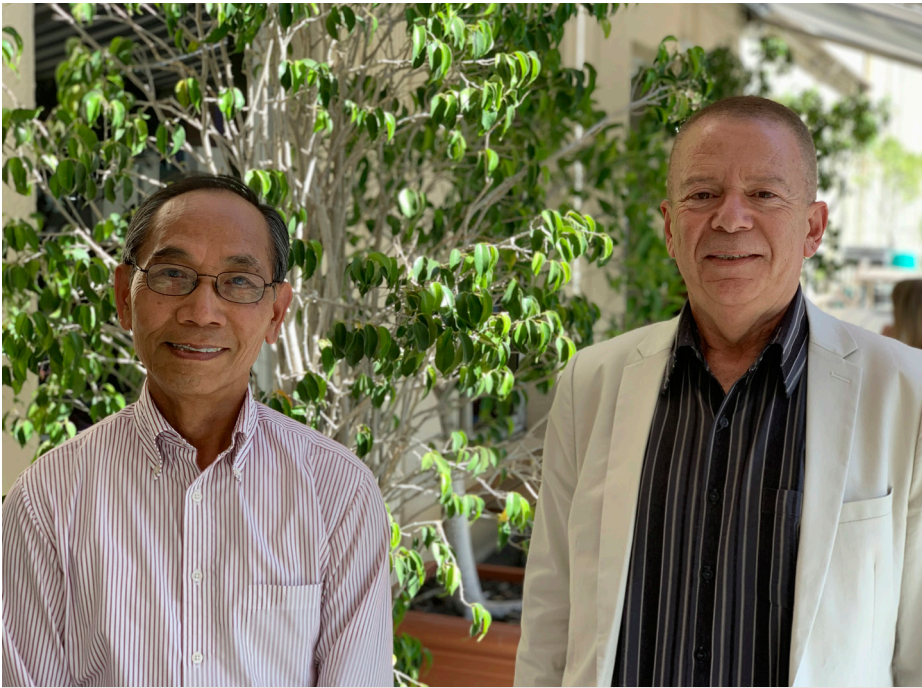
- 1% p.a. discount off standard variable rate
- \$30 annual fee waived

**To find out more or to apply contact [bd@australianmutual.bank](mailto:bd@australianmutual.bank)**

All information is correct as at 20/05/2020 and subject to change. <sup>1</sup>Australian Mutual Bank Ltd may offer special discounts on rates and fees from time to time on a number of lending products. Any lending discount applied is taken from the standard variable rate. These exclusive deals apply for the term of the Loan Contract or until you are no longer a PSA Member. Discounts do not apply to any special offers. All applications are subject to Australian Mutual Bank Ltd normal lending criteria. Terms, conditions, fees and charges apply. Full details available on application. Sydney Mutual Bank and Endeavour Mutual Bank are divisions of Australian Mutual Bank Ltd ABN 93 087 650 726 Australian credit licence 236476, AFSL 236476.







## SAFETY CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

**Meeting mental health needs in child protection.**

**T**here is no greater example of the civilising role of the public sector than the protection of at-risk children. Every day, PSA members confront the darker parts of our society to bring hope to children experiencing neglect and abuse.

Sadly, a Child Protection Worker's role comes at a very high personal cost. Workplace violence, threats, assaults, vicarious trauma and high workloads all contribute to the prevalence of psychological injuries among staff.

Research by the PSA shows the rate of psychological illness experienced by child protection staff exceeds that of those in the Ambulance and Police forces.

This research forms the basis of the *Safe Staff Safe Kids* Campaign. Launched during Mental Health Month in October last year, the campaign fights for PSA members to have safe workplaces, manageable workloads and genuine access to their Award entitlements such as flex time and flexible work. It demands the Department take the mental health concerns of child protection workers seriously.

The elements of the model include:

- Understanding – Recognise that wellbeing is a health and safety issue and that the Department has a legislated duty of care towards employees.
- Prevention + Protection – Develop a psychological injury management plan, together with annual wellbeing checks, a peer support program, flexible work arrangements. There should be no more temps and casuals.
- Support – Appoint a Chief Psychologist supported by a team of four psychologists with trauma qualifications.
- Recovery – Provide timely, safe and durable recovery at work programs, with alternative duties for injured employees, prompt approval of sick leave and special leave entitlements, and support for flexible start and finishing times. ■

## A HARSH MOVE IN ANYONE'S LANGUAGE

**The NSW Government tries to cut Interpreters' pay rates.**

**A** plan to halve the take-home pay of essential workers – all of whom are already in casual, insecure positions – has been strongly resisted by the PSA.

Multicultural NSW has filed an application in the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) to replace the current *Crown Employees Interpreters and Translators Award 2019*. The proposed Award severely reduces the pay and conditions of the Interpreters and Translators, who perform a vital role bridging the linguistic gap many people encounter when dealing with official bodies such as courts, police, Service NSW and other government agencies.

"The Award application is not by consent and the PSA will contest the

reduction of pay and conditions in the IRC," said PSA Acting Industrial Manager, Siobhan Callinan. "The PSA won't support stripping long-held, hard-fought employment conditions from Interpreters and Translators."

As with all Crown awards, the *Crown Employees Interpreters and Translators Award 2019* is subject to regular review under the *Industrial Relations Act*. The review of this Award was in March last year. Multicultural NSW argues the Award does not represent a market-driven business model and that its language services will be maintained only if they're "commercially viable", a strange constraint to put on an organisation that serves the public.

Two of three new PSA Delegates, Ninh Nguyen and Steve Karakia (pictured above) said their roles are vital for their communities. The third Delegate is Zeina Oissa. ■



# A SUPER VICTORY

**The CPSU NSW digs deep and scores a win for staff in Charles Sturt University.**

**N**umbers don't lie – or do they? The CPSU NSW's Senior Delegate at Charles Sturt University, John Jones, must have asked himself this question as he looked at the voluntary redundancy payouts going to members. Employees with 10 years' service were receiving more superannuation than employees with 20 years' service. Something didn't add up.

A bit of forensic accounting and Mr Jones found what he was looking for. The calculations had two components – a payment in lieu of notice which attracts employer super entitlements, and a payment based on years of service with no super entitlements. The total payout was capped at 60 weeks.

"The university calculated the 'three weeks' per year of service' payout first. So an employee of 20 years got 60 weeks' pay and no 16 weeks in lieu of notice and, as a consequence, no super on that component," explained Mr Jones. "This was the wrong way around. The payment in lieu should be applied first and equally to all employees. Then the three weeks' pay for each year of service is calculated, in accordance with our Enterprise Agreement."

The difference was significant and worth more than \$250,000 in additional super to affected employees.

Mr Jones spotted the mistake because he led the team that negotiated the current redundancy provisions into the Enterprise Agreement several years earlier. ■



## DUO CALL TIME

**J**ohn Jones, who did so much for Charles Sturt University members, including the superannuation win, is one of two long-term Delegates leaving their roles for others to take up the fight. "Mr Jones and Sian O'Sullivan from the University of Wollongong are moving on and will be missed by CPSU NSW staff and members," said Industrial Manager Thane Pearce.

At the University of Wollongong, Ms O'Sullivan organised a number of Enterprise Agreements and was known to be always there for members facing individual issues.

She was on the executive of the Higher Education Representative Council and was a Women's Councillor for the PSA/CPSU NSW. She is remaining on the executive of the South Coast Labour Council.

John was the union's key person in multiple bargaining rounds.

## CLEAR THE WAY TO CLASS

**The CPSU NSW has raised concerns about hygiene at Sydney University's Conservatorium Library.**

As more Professional Staff transition from working from home back to Sydney University, the CPSU NSW has been made aware of members' concerns about COVID-19 safety, particularly in the Conservatorium Library.

The CPSU NSW learned library staff have been told to disinfect frequently used areas within the libraries at the commencement of their shifts to contain costs.

Library staff raised concerns about risks associated with untrained staff dealing with high-usage areas and requested that appropriately trained cleaners be responsible.

Adding to the confusion, the CPSU NSW was advised the Conservatorium Library is operating under two sets of rules regarding COVID-19 physical distancing. While Conservatorium High School students, who have access to the library, are not required to physically distance, university students and library staff are.

The CPSU NSW was of the view that staff and students are being exposed to a heightened risk and that all users of the library are to social distance.

The CPSU NSW has asked SafeWork NSW to intervene and ensure that best practice takes place. ■





# MAKE SCHOOLS SAFE FOR EVERYONE

## PSA demands changes to the NSW Government's Draft Student Behaviour Strategy.

**P**rincipals would have the power to extend a student's suspension from school in cases involving violence, criminal behaviour or weapons, under a submission developed by the PSA to make schools safer for all.

The PSA's submission is in response to the NSW Government's draft Student Behaviour Strategy, which proposes a reduction in the maximum suspension period from 20 to 10 days.

The PSA argues Principals may need to suspend a student for longer to meet their obligation to provide a safe work environment.

"PSA members generally support a reduction in the maximum suspension period, especially for younger children in Kindergarten to Year 2," said Siobhan Callinan, the PSA's Acting Industrial Manager for Education. "However, we are concerned the new strategy has been developed without sufficient consideration of the impact of critical incidents, including acts of violence towards other students, teachers and non-teaching staff."

An analysis of long suspensions – up to 20 days – in 2019 shows 8182 were for physical violence; 1277 were for serious

criminal behaviour; and 1085 were for possession or use of illegal substances.

Another 767 suspensions were for using or possessing a prohibited weapon and 272 were for using an implement as a weapon or threatening to use a weapon.

Ms Callinan said the suspension data show the risks PSA members can face in their workplace.

**IN SOME CASES, PRINCIPALS  
ATTEMPT TO DISCOURAGE  
SCHOOLS STAFF FROM  
MAKING REPORTS**

"Schools must be safe and supportive environments for everyone – students, teachers, school administrative and support staff and other non-teaching staff," she said. "Unfortunately, too many of our members, particularly School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs), have been on the receiving end of violent incidents including assault and being threatened with weapons."

The Department of Education requires all safety incidents to be reported to both the school and its Incident Report and Support Hotline. In some cases, Principals attempt to dissuade staff from making reports on the Hotline,

especially temporary staff who don't wish to jeopardise their employment. The PSA submission argues a single reporting system should be introduced to provide an accurate picture of the number of incidents in schools.

### Secure SLSO workforce needed

A major flaw of the draft strategy is its failure to acknowledge SLSOs and Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) and the work they do supporting students with behavioural issues.

PSA research shows 60 per cent of SLSOs and 20 per cent of AEOs are temporary employees due to the Department of Education's encouragement of insecure employment.

"A short-term temporary does not know if he or she will be employed beyond a term," Ms Callinan said. "A long-term temporary usually doesn't know if they will have a job from one year to the next. This is an unacceptable employment practice that does nothing to promote the planning needed to improve the outcomes for students with behavioural problems."

"The PSA knows SLSOs with exemplary employment records who have been temporary employees for more than a decade.

"Yet Principals refuse to support their applications for conversion to permanent employment due to a lack of funding certainty." ■



# SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS KEY PLAYERS IN COVID-19 FIGHT

## The pandemic affects more than the lungs.

**A** global health crisis. Isolation from peers. Loss of social interaction. Fear about the future. Students are living with an unprecedented level of uncertainty and anxiety.

When the pressure of the pandemic combines with the trials of study and school life, the impact can be overwhelming.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, one in seven children and young people experienced a mental health issue. As the pandemic enters its second year, school psychologists say the risk to the mental wellbeing of students is increasing.

School Psychologist Nicholas Formosa works at three public schools and has no doubt COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on a large number of children.

"The students most affected are those who have struggled to engage in an on-line learning platform and who utilise the school environment as a safe space away from difficult home situations," Mr Formosa said. "Young people with autism spectrum disorder have also been impacted, as leaving and returning to school has meant a significant shift in their structure and routine."

School Psychologist Ben Bramston believes the disruption caused by COVID-19 affected students differently. Many missed their friends and were excited to return to the classroom. Other students did better when learning at home.

"For some kids being at home and home schooling was perfect," he said. "I am thinking of some young people on the [autism] spectrum. They found being away from all of the busy stimulation to be a nice break for them. Some of these students have really struggled to return to school."

"High school kids who had been struggling with school for many reasons such as behaviour problems, fitting in, and typically with long-term learning problems associated with attention and learning deficits, found it harder to come back."

Research in Australia and internationally confirms the concerns school psychologists have about the impact of COVID-19 on students. A survey by Headspace, a provider

of mental health services to young people, found 74 per cent of attendees at its centres experienced a deterioration in their mental health.

While there is a greater awareness of the need for mental health support for young people, the resources have not kept up with the growth in demand.

"I think the understanding of mental health in our schools is getting better following public mental health campaigns. However, many mental health support services continue to lack either the necessary funding, or the ability to expand their services to meet the growing demands of the communities' mental health needs," Mr Formosa said.

Mr Bramston points to a growing willingness to share and talk about mental health issues as a positive development during then lockdowns. "There seemed to be more people speaking out via YouTube clips and on social media about how they felt being stuck at home, and how they and their kids were keeping busy to offset any unnecessary 'worry-wart' thinking."

So while the role of the psychologist

and the work they do in the school environment has never been more important, there are steps school staff and parents can do to help young people.

The advice of Mr Bramston is to start by listening. "Perhaps the simplest suggestion I can make is empathise more with young people, at home in your one conversations with them, or at school. It is a simple but skilled thing counsellors do, which anyone can learn."

"Listen to the problem without interrupting. Don't offer a solution unless asked. And say 'that must be really hard for you, having that happen', and pause. Doing this three or four times in a conversation, without offering to 'fix it', may go a long way to help a person feel heard," Mr Bramston said.

Mr Formosa agrees communication is the key to helping a student with a mental health issue. "Let the student know you remain empathetic to their needs and actively engage in supporting them to seek out help. Having just a single supportive person in a young person's life can be life-changing." ■



# KEEPING DEMOCRACY SAFE FROM COVID-19

## Meet the people cleaning up the halls of power.

**T**hey are the people working in State Parliament who don't make the news: the cleaners who have kept COVID-19 out of the country's oldest legislative chamber.

"We are the cleaners for NSW State Parliament," said Cleaning Supervisor and PSA member Miguel Romero. "We do the work you don't see – disinfecting doorknobs, scrubbing bathrooms, sterilising kitchens. We are frontline and are proud to have protected Parliamentarians and the public in the people's house every day of COVID-19. To serve the NSW public, especially during this time, is a great honour."

"These Champions of the State are keeping our democratic institutions safe from the pandemic," said General Secretary Stewart Little, who worked as Senior Librarian at the State Parliament for five years before coming to the PSA. "And it is not just Parliament. All across the state, there are cleaning crews diligently keeping our members safe."

"This is the type of unheralded, essential work that needs to be recognised with a pay rise." ■



## THE DRIVING FORCE AT MACQUARIE STREET



Ministerial Drivers meet with General Secretary Stewart Little and industrial staff Nick Player and Davis Murphy at Parliament House.

**Their eyes on the road and their ears closed to any sensitive information they hear in the back seat, Ministerial Drivers are hard-working Champions of the State.**

"These members undertake daily safety checks of vehicles, maintain impeccable road safety standards and ensure NSW Ministers are safely transported to important meetings," said PSA Organiser Davis Murphy. "They are proud to serve the people of NSW in this critical role."

"Ministerial Drivers are always mindful of the sensitive information discussed in their vehicles and pride themselves on their discretion. What is discussed in the car, stays in the car."

The PSA, mindful of the unusual hours Drivers do, is pushing for better management of issues such as fatigue. The union also believes too many temporary and casual staff are among the Drivers' ranks and would like to see more permanent employees behind the wheel.

Visiting the Drivers at Parliament House, PSA General Secretary Stewart Little vowed to continue to back the Ministerial Drivers' claims for a safer, more-secure workplace. ■





# THE KEY TO LOWER BILLS

**W**hen you work hard for the people of NSW, you want every dollar you earn to work hard for you. That's why the PSA works with Maxxia, Australia's largest employee benefits provider, to help our members with salary packaging.

*Red Tape* spoke to Maxxia's NSW Relationship Manager Allanna Lakin about how you can cut the costs of getting a car through a novated lease.

## **Why should PSA members consider a novated lease?**

Maxxia may help you reduce the tax you pay in ways that are approved by the Australian Tax Office. A novated car lease allows you to pay for your car and car expenses with your pre-tax salary dollars. This may reduce your taxable income so you pay less tax. If you take out a normal car loan with a bank, your repayments are made from your post-tax income.

## **What is a novated lease?**

The word "novated" simply means the obligations in the leasing contract are transferred from one party to another. In the case of a novated lease, you and your employer agree to pay part of your salary to a leasing company to cover your car expenses.

## **What expenses can be included in the lease?**

You can bundle your lease payments together with your car's running costs –

petrol, insurance, rego and servicing – into one regular payment. You can't include costs such as road tolls, traffic infringements or accessories fitted after purchase.

A novated lease may benefit almost anyone who wants a car. You don't have to be a big earner or drive lots of kilometres to benefit from a novated car lease.

## **How does a novated lease work?**

A new, used or existing car is leased in your name. Instead of paying for your car with the money left over after you pay tax, the lease is paid with a combination of your pre and post-tax salary. Your employer deducts the lease payments from your salary and pays it directly to the leasing company.

Salary packaging a car may lower your taxable income and reduce the cost of getting into and running your next car.

## **How much does a novated lease cost and how much can I save?**

The savings may be substantial. For example, if you earn \$80,000 a year and want a medium-sized car valued at \$25,000, your savings could potentially be close to \$7500 over a five-year lease.

## **Do I have to buy a new car?**

No. Maxxia can help you save money on a new, used or even your existing car. If you want a new car, Maxxia's nationwide preferred dealer network gives you access to exclusive discounts.

If you know the used car you want, Maxxia can take care of its purchase.

Maxxia can also salary package your existing car, unlocking any equity you have in it – possibly freeing up a cash lump

sum for you to put towards a renovation or holiday and giving you all the benefits of a novated lease.

## **How long does a novated lease last?**

Lease terms can vary from one to five years. You can choose a lease term that best suits your personal needs.

## **What happens when the lease term runs out?**

You have a number of options towards the end of your lease and Maxxia can help you with whatever you choose to do.

There will be a residual amount owing on the car at the end of the lease term. This will vary depending on the length of the lease and the estimated value of the car. When the lease term is nearing its end, you can choose your next step.

First, you can pay the remaining amount owing on the car. Once you do, the car is yours to keep or to sell.

Second, you could refinance the car by entering into a new lease. There are restrictions based on the car's age and value.

Third, you could upgrade to a new car by trading in your current vehicle and paying any amount owing.

Maxxia provides advice to all customers on what the best approach is for them.

## **What else do I need to know?**

Maxxia has a Novated Lease Education Hub on its website. Visit [www.maxxia.com.au/novated-lease](http://www.maxxia.com.au/novated-lease) and check out all the helpful information, videos and contact options. Or call 1300 123 123. ■

# TIME TO GET HEALTHY?



## Your unions and the Workers Health Centre (WHC) offer you a free Healthy Lifestyle Check.

**T**he confidential online check gives you immediate feedback on your health and your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease or mental illness. You will also receive advice on making changes to improve your health with referrals to lifestyle coaching programs and other health services if required.

When workers are healthy they feel better, have more energy and are more likely to be satisfied at work. Healthy workers have increased morale and engagement. They are more resilient to illness and less likely to suffer injuries and strains.

Australians spend about one third of their lives at work, so a healthy workplace is important, not just for you, but for your colleagues and your employer.

The WHC can come to your workplace and conduct a confidential voluntary health check for your co-workers. They provide the tools and resources to put together a simple action plan to address priority health areas in your workplace.

Established in the early 1970s, the WHC is Australia's oldest workers' health, safety and return to work service. A not-for-profit organisation, WHC puts all its earnings into building services and investing in the interests of injured workers and their families. WHC is a union-preferred provider and is affiliated with many NSW unions.

Members can email WHC at [admin@workershealth.com.au](mailto:admin@workershealth.com.au) or call (02) 9749 7666. ■

## HOLIDAY LOCAL AND WIN

**For most members, the international departure lounge is off the agenda.**

This means it's a great time to visit one of our state's great National Parks or State Forests.

In these picturesque parts of NSW, PSA/CPSU NSW members are working hard to provide visitors with a break from urban life.

Not only will you get close to some of the country's finest natural features, you also get the chance to win a Fujifilm Instax Mini 11 instant camera, plus film.

Email a photo of yourself enjoying a National Park or State Forest to [psanews@psa.asn.au](mailto:psanews@psa.asn.au) for your chance to win.



## WINNERS

The following members of the PSA/CPSU NSW have won the 10 \$1000 Big4 vouchers on offer in our second round of the Bushfire Relief Giveaway. The promotion is designed to encourage members to holiday in regional NSW, which has been hit hard with bushfires,

drought and a COVID-related hit to visitor numbers.

**Josephine Russo**, NSW Police  
**Natalie Crane**,  
 Corrective Services  
**Kylee Ure**, Five Islands School  
**James Sheridan**, RMS  
**Jennifer Hinchcliff**,

Canobloas Rural Technical High School  
**Kevin Breen**, Downing Centre  
**Carol Lennox**, New Lambton Primary School  
**Charlotte Moar**, UTS  
**Caz O'Neill**, Downing Centre  
**Bruce Cantrill**, Crown Solicitor's Office



# FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

**For mental health and addiction issues, your union is here to help.**

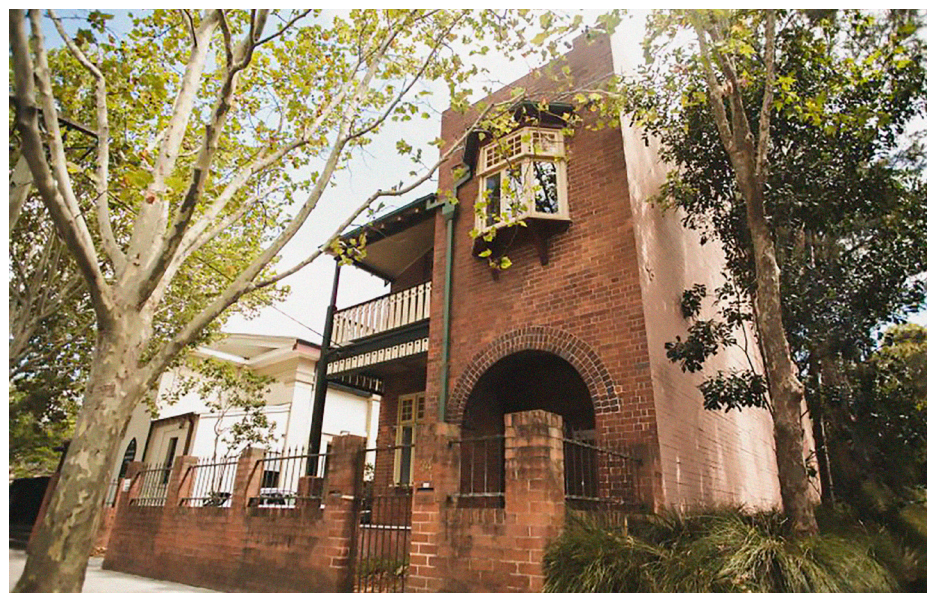
**U**nion membership pays: PSA/CPSU NSW members now have access to programs helping kick toxic addictions, as well as anxiety and depression associated with pregnancy childbirth and early parenthood.

## FOUNDATION HOUSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in addictive behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse and excessive gambling.

The PSA/CPSU NSW has teamed up with Foundation House to offer support to members looking to kick dangerous habits, providing funding towards the centre's running costs.

Under this new arrangement, all members and their immediate family will get priority on waiting lists with this program.



For financial members of the PSA/CPSU NSW these programs are available at no cost. The same applies to immediate family.

Foundation House, based in Sydney's inner west, runs a 28-day residential in-house rehab program, followed by ongoing support, with outpatient counselling and relapse prevention. Treatment programs also provide support for the family members and partners of participants.

"Confidential and discreet confirmation of financial membership is assured," said Membership Services Manager Kym Ward.

Foundation House was formed 20 years ago for workers in the construction industry, with funding from unions in that industry. Since then it has expanded its operations to members from a wide variety of unions.

## GIDGET FOUNDATION

"Parenthood brings many joys; but pregnancy and the early days of childhood can also be a difficult time," said General Secretary Stewart Little at the launch of the program for members. "Nearly one in five mothers and one in 10 fathers will experience perinatal depression and anxiety and about half of all new parents have adjustment disorders."

In response to this, the PSA/CPSU NSW has teamed up with Gidget House, which offers services to alleviate pre- and postnatal depression and anxiety.

PSA/CPSU NSW members can receive 10 free professional psychological support sessions a year to help alleviate anxiety and depression. There are five centres in Sydney and five in regional NSW.

Treatments can be tailored to individuals or couples and participants also have access to books and fact sheets to help them negotiate the maze that is early parenthood.

The Gidget Foundation also provides support to women and their partners who have suffered loss through miscarriage, stillbirth or termination. ■

General Secretary Stewart Little and Manager Membership Services Kym Ward meet staff at Foundation House (top left) and a Gidget Foundation facility (left).



# RING OF STEEL

**Long versed in stopping inmates getting out of gaols, PSA members now had to stop a pandemic getting in.**

**R**arely has the state been so happy to pay for a facility, only for it to sit unused. A temporary hospital sits next to the three corrective facilities in the Sydney suburb of Silverwater. Built to house prisoners with COVID-19, its narrow corridors, exposed ventilation and isolation beds make it look like the set of a science fiction film. But it is there to help keep NSW safe.

The ward, unused at the time *Red Tape* was going to press, is part of an

**"IT WAS REMARKABLE HOW WE WORKED TOGETHER. IT WAS UNPRECEDENTED"**

ambitious plan to stop COVID-19 ripping through NSW prisons, then moving on to the general public. It is designed to keep inmates isolated from others in the prison system and to ensure any outbreak behind bars does not become a burden on the state's health system. The ward is run by Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) and staffed by Justice Health-trained officers who expressed a desire to work in the hospital.

"If an inmate tests positive, they will be transported to the COVID hospital, in a truck by themselves," said Acting Superintendent Blake Conwell, who is managing the centre. "Staff and the inmate will all be equipped with personal protective equipment [PPE]."

"The trained staff will be asked to work 12-hour shifts in the unit, to limit the potential exposure of staff."





Left to right: Governor Adam Wilkinson, POVB Chairperson Nicole Jess, Assistant Commissioner Kevin Corcoran, Acting Superintendent, Blake Cornwell, POVB Delegate Mark Hutchinson, Manager of Security Scott Everingham and POVB Country Vice Chair Natalie Howes.







Left to right: Response and Recovery Manager Rebecca Edwards, Manager of Security Kenneth Pese and Natalie Howes in the COVID-19 Command Centre.

All this is necessary because gaols are ideal for the spread of COVID-19, cramming large numbers of people into a confined area 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People share small cells and washing facilities and eat and exercise in close proximity.

The lack of patients in the temporary hospital confirms the outstanding job PSA members working at CSNSW have done keeping COVID-19 out of prisons. Their success is all the more remarkable when viewed against the situation overseas.

## LESSONS FROM ABROAD

In the US, where the response of different states to COVID-19 has been uneven, more than 252,000 inmates have been infected – a number 50 times greater than all the cases in NSW since the pandemic began. There have been 1450 COVID-19 deaths in US prisons, including at least 80 Prison Officers.

In California's oldest and most notorious gaol, San Quentin State Prison, 2000 of the 3700 inmates became infected as the virus snaked its way from cell to cell. The Californian Appellate Court found the lack of care shown for the inmates was

unconstitutional and violated the Eighth Amendment that prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. The judges said there was "deliberate indifference" to the safety and health of the inmates and the lack of urgency exhibited by officials to the threat of COVID-19 was "morally indefensible and constitutionally untenable". Despite the gaol housing some of the state's most dangerous criminals, the court ordered its population halved through the early release or transfer of inmates.

The Officer Down Memorial Page, a poignant online tribute honouring America's fallen police, sheriffs (who operate local gaols) and corrections officers, now lists COVID-19 as a death in the line of duty. In the past 12 months, more US officers have been lost to the virus than all the other causes of death combined, outnumbering firearm fatalities by three to one.

In Britain, Prison Officers as young as 33 have died from the condition, which has also killed scores of inmates.

Iran refuses to disclose the number of infected prisoners, but with a million infections across the country and more than 50,000 deaths, the situation in the prisons is suspected to be dire.

Brazil has the world's third-largest number of inmates and the second highest number of COVID-19 deaths. By the beginning of December last year, 183 people had lost their lives inside jails and prisons due to the disease.

In Sri Lanka, inmates at a Colombo gaol protested the transfer of prisoners infected with COVID-19 from another facility. They demanded more testing and a new isolation facility to stem a surge in infections in the overcrowded gaol. The protests turned violent when prison authorities stepped in, leaving eight prisoners dead and more than 50 injured.

Many countries, including France, India, Indonesia, Ireland, and Italy and Turkey have simply released inmates convicted of lesser offences.

## COVID-19 COMMAND CENTRE

The key to NSW's success has been the ground-breaking COVID-19 Command Centre set up at the PSA's behest by Corrective Services NSW in its headquarters near Sydney's Central Station. The Command Centre is a collection of rooms placed around a light-filled lobby. The messy chaos – notes on walls and boxes of PPE piled high in corners – contrasts with the serene calm of the highly professional staff working in the area.

Country Vice Chair of the Prison Officers Vocational Branch (POVB), Natalie Howes, is one of the PSA members working in the Command Centre, developing and executing the successful strategy.

"Once COVID-19 hit, we asked the Department for full union coverage in the Centre," she said. "[POVB Secretary] Amanda Cotter was there for the first two weeks, then I came in."

The Centre also had union representation from the Correctional Officers Vocational Branch (COVB), as well as Community Justice, Non-Custodial and Youth Justice.

"We began looking at what a major risk we faced and what we had to do to keep it to a minimum," said Ms Howes. "We realised that if it got into prisons, it was going to be catastrophic."

The Command Centre team monitored the horror stories engulfing prisons abroad, as well as developments in other Australian states.

And their strategy worked. Ms Howes



said as the Command Centre operated it became obvious NSW “set the benchmark and people from other jurisdictions came to us”.

To minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading in gaols, the number of people coming in and out of prisons had to be cut – keeping person-to-person contact to a minimum has proven worldwide to reduce transmission.

“Quickly, we stopped contact visits,” said Ms Howes. “We stopped external education providers coming in.”

Not all people – particularly Prison Officers – can be kept outside gaols, so the Command Centre introduced temperature testing and questionnaires for anyone entering the system. The questionnaires were adjusted as the situation required. Bans on recent overseas travel became bans on recent visits to Victoria, for example.

The Command Centre took over the allocation of PPE for all centres, to reduce the chance of one gaol hoarding supplies and another running short.

Ms Howes said this work was done against a backdrop of worry from members, with her phone inundated with calls from 6am to 11pm every day as Prison Officers from all over NSW sought information from their union about the pandemic’s progress and its likely effect on them and their families.

“It was extremely stressful,” said Ms Howes.

While the visit bans kept COVID-19 out of gaols, they also cut the supply of contraband, including narcotics. This led to behaviour issues as inmates began displaying withdrawal symptoms.

“There were riot situations in a lot of gaols,” said Ms Howes. “Violence was up.”

Ms Howes, who normally works at the prison in Oberon in the central west of NSW, said the introduction of “tablet visits”, where inmates talk to family members via iPad-style devices, helped reduce the level of stress and violence.

Chairperson of the POVB, Nicole Jess said the program’s success owes much to “the excellent work that our transport and court staff did working under difficult conditions, receiving new reception inmates from the community, who could have been infected”.

“Inmates come off the street drug-affected, aggressive and at times violent,” said Ms Jess. “Our court and transport staff were spat on at times, which only caused more concern to our

members. But we rose above everything, worked as a team and were able to ensure that we worked in a COVID-free environment.”

### **THE MESSY CHAOS – NOTES ON WALLS AND BOXES OF PPE PILED HIGH IN CORNERS – CONTRASTS WITH THE SERENE CALM OF THE HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL STAFF WORKING IN THE AREA**

#### **VISITS RECOMMENCE**

However, the ban was not permanent and Corrective Services NSW announced visits would commence again in November, with restrictions on who could enter the facilities and how the visits would be conducted.

Visits are limited to two people, can be no longer than 30 minutes and contact is restricted to a fist or elbow bump at the visit’s beginning and end. Food and drink

are banned and mask rules enforced.

CSNSW liaised extensively with the PSA over allowing visitors back into correctional facilities.

“The Command Centre will be a crucial point of information and instruction for POVB members as they manage the reintroduction of visits safely, meeting the ever-changing restrictions and protocols throughout the pandemic,” said POVB Vice Chairperson Jason Charlton. “The POVB’s main concern is the risk of introducing COVID-19 into the correctional environment, particularly in country locations where there has been little to no infection throughout the pandemic.”

“The Directors and Managers of the COVID Command Centre have met with POVB Delegates from every gaol across the state and presented their plan based on NSW Health advice and strict restrictions and protocols to minimise any risk of introducing COVID-19 into correctional centres across NSW.”

“Correctional Officers will once again demonstrate the dedicated frontline service they provide to the people of NSW when in-person visits recommence. We keep NSW safe in an environment that is not witnessed by most and rarely recognised by the Government like other more visible frontline services.”





## ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Prison Officers aren't the only ones running NSW gaols.

"We were all considered front line and we were told to report to work," said Education Services Coordinator David Gould (pictured right), who is one of the many non-custodial workers in the NSW prison system.

"We were keeping the place running, keeping services available and keeping things as normal as possible," he said.

He said unlike previous outbreaks, such as HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis, the issue with COVID-19 was not preventing inmates from infecting staff, but staff bringing the pandemic in.

"We wore masks when interacting with inmates. They weren't a risk to us, we were a risk to them," he said. "It was a reversal of normal."

Mr Gould, whose role has long involved teaching inmates about infection control, said previous outbreaks of diseases meant the NSW correctives system was well-prepared for COVID-19.

## KEEPING YOUTH JUSTICE COVID-FREE

Gaols are not the only places with COVID-19 risks. Quickly implementing changes to routines as the pandemic spread also kept the NSW Youth Justice system – at the time of press – COVID-19 free. Suzanne Evans, (pictured top right)



who works at the Riverina Youth Justice Centre said. "We started very early, asking questions and doing temperature checks".

As the pandemic spread, Youth Justice workers were better equipped to deal with it.

"There was plenty of PPE and training," said Ms Evans, who said some of the detainees were intimidated dealing with masked staff. However, as her centre is in a regional area with a low rate of infection, mask-wearing is now only used when large groups gather in small spaces.

Being close to the Victorian border, the Riverina Youth Justice Centre was forced to place some detainees in isolation, with staff required to provide

plenty of distractions such as games to prevent mental health issues from emerging. "Kids understand it has to happen," she said.

**"BUT WE ROSE ABOVE EVERYTHING, WORKED AS A TEAM AND WERE ABLE TO ENSURE THAT WE WORKED IN A COVID-FREE ENVIRONMENT"**

Left to right: Wendy Hoey of NSW Health, Deputy Commissioner Luke Grant, PSA General Secretary Stewart Little, Commissioner Peter Severin, Kevin Corcoran and Nicole Jess.



## SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Keeping gaols and Youth Justice centres COVID-free shows what can be achieved when management and the union attack a problem together.

"I could not fault [CSNSW] at all," said Ms Howes. "It was remarkable how we worked together. It was unprecedented."

She said the POVB's involvement meant the Department received unfiltered feedback from staff "at the ground level".

"I hope we proved we have the ability to work together."

Non-custodial member David Gould said the Department "did an excellent job".

"It's unbelievable," said Ms Evans from Youth Justice. "We have worked hand-in-hand. I've never experienced the level of consultation I have seen in the past six months.

"I hope it can continue." ■





# WHEN EXPERIENCE COUNTS AGAINST YOU

**Age discrimination is prevalent in our workplaces. It is also illegal.**

**I**t starts innocently enough. A twinge in your back prompts you to request a more suitable chair. You are sent for a complete medical and the next thing you know your manager is having a conversation with you about medical retirement.

Or it could be an office restructure that recommends four jobs be cut, three of which belong to you and two colleagues. You are all in your early sixties and have exemplary performance records.

Age discrimination is insidious and often invisible. It is also against the law. You may suspect age discrimination is the motive for your unfair treatment, yet it is often difficult to prove.

Ms Carmel McKeough from the PSA's Communities, Health & Education Team has helped many members successfully take action against employers

on the grounds of age discrimination, especially child protection workers in the Department of Communities and Justice.

"Age discrimination seems to be most prevalent with women around 61 or 62 years of age," Ms McKeough said. "Often it is a younger manager that has an issue with an older employee so they initiate a performance improvement program. Suddenly the older worker finds they have performance issues."

"The manager won't come out and say it's age discrimination. Instead you see things like 'incomplete record keeping' or 'unacceptable sick leave record' used against an employee to force them out. Often the only way to resolve the issue is to take it to the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC)."

Ms McKeough points to the case of a child protection worker in her 60s who was in a car accident while on duty. Her injuries were extensive, requiring two hip replacements that adversely affected her mobility.

"Her employer tried to get her to

medically retire saying her injuries meant it was not safe for her to continue working," Ms McKeough said. "This is despite there being no inherent physical requirements for case workers. It was clear her employer thought she was too old to continue in the job. The PSA took it to the IRC which found the employer's conduct unreasonable and directed the employee be given other duties while recovering."

Age discrimination is more widespread than people realise. A 2015 survey by the Australian Human Rights Commission found 27 per cent of older Australians faced workplace discrimination, forcing many to choose early retirement. In NSW there is no fixed retirement age and it is up to you when you choose to stop working. And it is against the law for your employer to force you to retire.

If you believe you are being discriminated against because of your age, your union is available to help you. Please contact the Member Support Centre on 1300 772 679. ■





# THE END OF AUSTERITY?

**Unlock the Treasury door, Modern Monetary Theory has transformed the debate over government spending, writes Dan Murphy.**

**W**hen Treasurer Dominic Perrottet stole NSW public servants' pay rises in 2020, he trotted out

familiar lines. Government workers must "make sacrifices" for the "greater good".

Come the budget, while rebooting the economy required stimulus, it was important to maintain "discipline" and engage in "budget repair," starting with public servants' pay rises.

These clichés have framed our understanding of public finances for decades. Governments, like households, must live within their means and there is no more important policy goal than a budget surplus.

COVID-19, however, has proved the great disrupter. It is only governments' spending that can get economies moving post-shutdown, and spend they have. NSW is set to be \$104 billion in debt by 2024, yet there is no great panic.

In a year that demanded reflection, economics had its lightbulb moment: If all this debt and deficit can be taken on without the sky falling, maybe the conventional wisdom is built on a myth.

Driving this reappraisal is a set of ideas known as Modern Monetary Theory (MMT). As governments the world over continue to take on record debt they will never be able to repay, we are going to be hearing a lot about MMT, with public servants owning a big stake in how it plays out.

## What is MMT?

Under current convention, government can only fund its activities by imposing taxes, or going into deficit, which must be financed by borrowing the difference between revenue and expenditure.

In reality, this "borrowing" involves the Reserve Bank auctioning off Australian government bonds. A select group of merchant banks bid and those willing to accept the lowest interest are successful. These bonds are then resold on international money markets. Australia pays the holders regular interest and the principal on maturity.

Funding government under MMT would be a simple administrative procedure: Treasury sells bonds to our Reserve Bank, which generates, via a keystroke, the required amount of money. This is

## MODERN MONETARY THEORY – KEY POINTS

- Countries with their own currency need not borrow to fund budget deficits
- The Federal Government can cover states' increased expenses due to COVID-19 without worrying about credit ratings
- Full employment is attainable via a jobs guarantee.

transferred back to government coffers to be spent.

The question of whether the government pays off the bond is academic. The Reserve Bank does not need the money to fund future bond purchases. If the government does pay the bond off, it creates a profit for the Reserve Bank, which is returned as a dividend to its owner, the government.

Some MMT models remove the Reserve Bank from this process and have Treasury supply the government with money directly.

In essence, MMT is a simple idea: that currency-issuing governments are never



revenue-constrained and do not have to borrow to fund their functions. From this principle flow many possibilities for a better and fairer economy.

Dr Steven Hail, economics lecturer at Adelaide University, is a prominent voice in the emerging MMT movement. When training London bankers in the 1990s he began to sense the classical theories he used didn't explain how the monetary system actually worked.

Dr Hail parted ways completely with mainstream economics following the failures of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and believes MMT is well on its way to replacing the old dogma.

"What we are going through at the moment is the most rapid paradigm shift in economic thinking in the history of the discipline," he said. "What MMT offers is not a 'free lunch'. All it says is we have no lack of Australian dollars. There can never be a crisis related to the funding of national debt because the government is a monetary sovereign. That is just a pure fact."

He advances MMT as the framework for addressing many issues, including inflated state government deficits arising from COVID.

"State government spending in response to the pandemic should be taken on by the currency issuer, the national government," he said. "They don't have to worry about credit rating agencies."

Viewed through an MMT lens, there is no justification for cutting public servants' pay now, nor will there be in three years' time for state austerity budgets in order to pay down debt.

## **JOBS FOR ALL**

Maintenance of full employment is actually enshrined as an obligation in our Reserve Bank's charter although it is many years since Australia experienced it. For MMT advocates this is a result of deliberate policies to maintain a pool of unemployed in order to suppress wages and inflation.

In response, MMT proposes a federal jobs guarantee. Every unemployed person would be offered a useful job in their local area at a socially inclusive minimum wage.

Concerns have been raised that job guarantee roles could supplant work now done at higher wages. Dr Hail acknowledges that unions will have to be alert to this but should focus on the improved bargaining position greater economic security would place all workers in.

The backlash to MMT's rising popularity is in full swing among those wedded to the status quo. When ABC finance guru Alan Kohler discussed the merits of MMT in June, Liberal MP Tim Wilson took to Twitter, asking if he ran his personal finances by incurring endless debt. "Governments are not households" Kohler fired back and the lazy analogy has not carried the same impact since.

Another swipe goes something like "they can't just conjure up money, it's alchemy, preposterous!" This is undermined by the fact all central banks are creating money and buying their government's bonds to avoid a debt crisis. Australia's Reserve is doing this right now to the tune of \$100 billion. This is tacit endorsement of MMT but is downplayed.

A more substantial critique MMT must grapple with is that it makes high inflation inevitable as more money enters circulation. MMT advocates respond that a "borrowed" dollar is as inflationary as a dollar issued by the Reserve Bank. What matters is whether spending outstrips growth in the productive capacity of the economy.

In Australia, inflation is at historic lows, meaning there is much scope to spend on improved services and address issues such as climate change and homelessness. In the long run however, any MMT regime will need effective inflation monitoring and management mechanisms.

MMT raises many questions. An obvious one, if governments can fund themselves, do we need taxes at all? This theory rests

on a coherent body of thought that has already answered this (taxes underpin demand for a nation's currency) and many others.

The political question raised by MMT is a more fundamental one. What if all the lines we have been fed for years about the need to cut and privatise in order to avoid passing on debt to our children's children are based on a myth?

In the MMT era it will be increasingly difficult for governments to cry poor.

*Dan Murphy is a PhD researcher in education statistics at the University of Melbourne.* ■

## **WHO TO FOLLOW**

### **Professor Stephanie Kelton**

Advisor to Bernie Sanders, author of bestselling *The Deficit Myth* @StephanieKelton

### **Professor Bill Mitchell**

Australian academic at the University of Newcastle. Blogs daily at bilbo. [economicoutlook.net](http://economicoutlook.net) @billy\_blog

**Warren Mosler** Former Wall Street hedge fund manager, one of the first to call out the debt cult @wbmosler

**Dr Steven Hail** Leading Australian MMT advocate @StevenHailAus

**Jengis Osman** MMT-savvy union organiser @JengisO

Steven Hail





# BUSHFIRES:

## LEARN FROM THE PAST AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE

The Black Summer bushfires of 2019 and 2020 devastated much of NSW and revealed a broken system. Did NSW heed the warnings and prepare the state for a changed climate and a hotter, drier future? Or will PSA and CPSU NSW members be once again called upon to face a state on fire?

NPWS Ranger Tegan Burton in Lane Cover National Park.







Since blazes ravaged Australia's east coast in 2019 and 2020, a Royal Commission into Disaster Arrangements and a NSW Bushfire Inquiry have reported, making more than 150 recommendations on how NSW can better prepare for another fire season.

The PSA's submissions to both these inquiries show how bushfire preparations are impacted by budget and staffing cuts and how things can be done better.

The PSA/CPSU NSW has members in all four fire combat agencies in NSW: Fire and Rescue, the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW).

So is NSW ready for another bushfire season? The PSA believes the answer is "No". Here are the union's concerns and recommendations:

### INCREASE STAFFING LEVELS

One thousand more professional firefighters and fire management staff are needed in order to be ready for another major fire season.

Years of budget cuts, efficiency dividends, restructures and redundancies have left too few experienced firefighting staff on the ground. Fire combat agencies will again be asked to do too much with too few resources, causing PSA members to suffer fatigue and exhaustion.

The NPWS is missing more than a third

of its most experienced fire management staff.

The RFS is missing 20 per cent of its workforce. The State Mitigation Service, which does fire preparation work including hazard reductions, is chronically understaffed with a massive backlog of unfilled positions.

The full-time equivalent firefighter positions at the FCNSW have been cut by 50 per cent during a 10-year period.

### INVEST IN EQUIPMENT

The state's bushfire fighting ability is being hampered by a lack of funding for equipment, vehicles and communication systems.

Last year, there were not enough vehicles of the right type for the fire ground. Many vehicles are aging with 30-year-old trucks still in use.

The NPWS, RFS and FCNSW all require more "fit-for-purpose" aircraft for firefighting. The aircraft fleet size needs to be increased so firefighters can respond effectively when multiple ignitions occur at the same time.

The existing communication systems are a major safety issue. They are inconsistent and incompatible across the firefighting agencies. And there is an urgent need for more effective electronic systems to track vehicles and individuals in fire-affected areas.

### A BIGGER ROLE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

The PSA has called for a strong

Commonwealth coordinating authority to oversee the efforts of the states. This coordinating body should set national standards for training, equipment and preparedness.

The royal commission recommended a National Cabinet approach and a new, dedicated National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency. The Commonwealth Government has committed to implementing all the royal commission recommendations.

The Commonwealth provides little money to help with the fighting of bushfires. This has to change. The Commonwealth needs to increase funding for bushfire preparations and hazard reduction, as well as the upgrade and expansion of the aircraft fleet.

### ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The PSA has warned the NSW Government that climate change is causing excessive fuel loads to develop on the ground as well as narrowing the window when hazard-reduction works can be undertaken.

This link between climate change and the bushfires was confirmed by the royal commission. The commissioners accepted the expert evidence that climate change is increasing both the frequency and intensity of natural disasters.

The PSA has called for the setting of ambitious national targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It has also called for the states and territories to play their part. ■

## BUSHFIRE ROYAL COMMISSION HEEDS PSA'S ADVICE

**The Royal Commission into Disaster Arrangements has backed the PSA's call for Canberra to do more to coordinate the response of the federal, state and territory governments in future blazes.**

The report recommends a National Cabinet or equivalent be used to improve decision-making, aided by a new National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency.

The commissioners said future disasters will require national coordination and that the Australian public expected greater Australian Government action.

"While state and territory governments should retain control of their resources,

the Australian Government should coordinate nationally for these types of large-scale, multi-jurisdictional disasters, and can play an important leadership role," the commissioners said.

In response, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said implementing every recommendation was a priority.

Stewart Little, General Secretary of the PSA, welcomed the royal commission report. "NSW experienced the full fury of Australia's most devastating bushfires. It was our members on the fire front and

behind the scenes who worked to the point of exhaustion to save lives and property."

"The lessons learnt by PSA members – often at great personal cost – were presented to the commissioners who have clearly listened to what our members had to say. They agreed greater support is required from the Australian Government, especially when disasters are on a national scale."

The PSA's Departmental Committee Chair for the NSW Rural Fire Service, Jim Killen, said the royal commission was generally on the right track, identifying





what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of Australia's fire response.

"Traditionally fire management has been the role of the states, but the Black Summer bushfires showed we need national coordination and a body that can formalise many of the informal arrangements between professionals working in different jurisdictions," Mr Killen said.

"The Commonwealth should look at funding a permanent and properly-staffed hazard reduction workforce. Many of the mitigation staff doing hazard reductions are employed on short-term contracts. Some have been employed as temps for nearly nine years. Hazard reduction requires many things to go right and you need to be ready to go when the opportunity comes, so having

a permanent and properly staffed team would make a big difference."

Mr Killen said the equipment used for hazard reduction was too small to be effective, consisting of edge-trimmers and chain saws used for small plant management. Better equipment designed for broader-scale clearing would allow the hazard reduction teams to cover more ground in the time available to them.

The PSA called for national standards on training, equipment, safety and firefighters numbers. However, the commissioners preferred state and territory governments to continue to have responsibility – and accountability – for emergency management.

You can read the submission at [psa.asn.au/dis-report](https://psa.asn.au/dis-report) ■

## REMEMBERING THE BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES

- 33 tragic deaths
- 3,000 homes destroyed
- 24 million hectares burnt
- 20% of Australia's bushland burnt
- 40% of NSW's bushland burnt
- 50% of the Gondwana world heritage rainforests burnt
- 80% of the Blue Mountains world heritage area burnt
- 1 billion animals killed
- \$10 billion financial impact





## NOT SUCH A HOT IDEA NOW

### COVID-19 TAKES OUT A HATED WORKPLACE MODEL

**It was a workplace revolution. The rise of shared work environments and hot-desking was transforming workplaces and freeing employees from the physical constraints that bound them to a desk. The felt-walled cubicles covered in personal memorabilia were heading the way of the fax machine.**

**E**mployees were becoming a non-territorial, collaborative, innovative and activity-based workforce.

It seemed nothing could derail the determination and drive to hot-desking. Nothing, that is, except a global health crisis.

The implications of COVID-19 for the workplace are yet to be fully understood. What is clear is the workplace of the future looks very different in 2021 than it

did in 2019. The focus no longer on where and how work happens in an office, it is now on how to work without coming into the office at all.

Hot-desking is when employees move between workspaces sharing desks, chairs, computers and keyboards because they do not have an allocated workspace. Activity-based work arrangements encourage flexibility in the use of different spaces such as meeting rooms and lounge areas to carry out work.

In 2017, research by real estate consultants CBRE found 66 per cent of workplaces in the Asia-Pacific intend to have shared desks by 2020. Now, SafeWork Australia recommends offices stop or limit hot-desking and activity-based working.

When the priority is fighting a pandemic, the inherent risks in hot-desking are apparent – the spread of infection topping the list.

The NSW Government has some catching-up to do. Its guidelines for office fit outs state: “Flexible workspace/desk sharing is encouraged” and that “Agencies

must actively pursue and develop plans for office accommodation that is suitable for activity-based working.”

We now know that preventing another COVID-19 outbreak requires work arrangements that encourage social distancing. This means hot-desking and shared spaces are out, working remotely and from home are in. Employees may be required to work from home regularly, not just for days but for weeks at a time.

According to Suzanne Mann, the PSA’s Work Health and Safety Officer, everything we thought about the future of the office has to change.

“The implications of remote work are far reaching,” she said. “Government agencies need to review their approach to workplace health and safety including all their policies and procedures, given the reality of people working from home.”

This is not just the right thing to do, Ms Mann explains, it is also an obligation required by legislation. The Work Health and Safety Act says employers, including all NSW Government agencies, have a



primary duty of care to their employees and must provide and maintain a work environment without risks to health and safety.

“The legislation says the NSW Government must ensure its employees are not put at risk from the work they are required to do. And that applies to both an employee’s physical health, as much as their mental health. This means NSW Government agencies need to do proper risk assessments of the environment their employees are now working in.”

Government employers should provide guidance on what is a safe home office environment and whether the home work environment is deemed a risk.

“If a risk is identified the onus is on the employer to address it,” Ms Mann said. “This may mean sending someone to the home to assist and check the ergonomics, as well as having appropriate equipment purchased and delivered to the employee’s home for use when working.”

So what does a safe home workplace setup look like? SafeWork NSW has published a checklist that outlines the principles for computer-based work when setting up a work space in a home, including:

- **SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE WORK SURFACE**

Find a work surface that allows for an upright posture and have relaxed shoulders with elbows slightly above the work surface height. There needs to be adequate leg space so feet can be flat on the ground.

- **SETTING UP THE CHAIR** Adjust the height of the chair and armrests. If the chair isn’t adjustable, ensure it is the right fit for the work surface and that it gives adequate lumbar support.

- **USING THE LAPTOP/MONITOR** Position the monitor directly in front at arm’s length when seated. Raise the screen of a laptop or tablet up so the top of the screen is at eye level. Where possible, set the work area at 90 degrees to any windows to reduce glare reflection.

- **THE KEYBOARD AND MOUSE** Where possible use a separate keyboard and mouse. This makes the rest of the workstation more adjustable. Place the keyboard directly and symmetrically in front with the mouse positioned directly next to keyboard. ■

## ACTING THE PART

### PSA House hosts mental health workshops.

A group set up to fight the incidence of suicide visited PSA House to demonstrate its programs to managers from several public sector departments.

Using professional actors, theatre company Mind Blank runs role-playing type programs to take participants through examples of mental illness in the workplace.

For the PSA/CPSU NSW demonstration in October, three actors from Mind Blank played out various roles, covering issues such as work-life balance,

stress working from home and depression. Audience members were encouraged to come into the performance area to provide input on how the scenarios, based on real-life work events, could have been better managed.

Introducing the day, General Secretary Stewart Little talked about the union’s role in fighting mental health issues in the workplace, particularly in harrowing areas such as correctives, schools and Youth Justice, and fire-fighting areas such as the Rural Fire Service, National Parks and Forestry Corp.

“The public sector has the unenviable tag of having the highest rate of workers’ compensation claims,” he said. “It comes at a huge cost to the Government and a bigger cost to them and their families.” ■





# OUR NEW NORMAL?

## A 'hybrid' model combining remote and on-site work is proposed for NSW.

**I**t's a way of working that offers the best of both worlds: a 'hybrid model' that combines three days on-site with two days working at home each week. This is what the NSW Innovation and Productivity Council believe is the future of work in NSW.

Within weeks of the NSW Government directing non-essential workers home, the number of employees working remotely hit record levels. It was the start of a nine-month experiment in remote working involving millions of employees across all industries. By May 2020, the proportion of employees working from home was 46 per cent – a level unlikely to be seen again soon.

Now with the repeal of the Public Health Order on working from home, the state's workforce is left wondering what happens next. Will this temporary public health measure turn into a permanent revolution in how we work?

The Innovation Council believes the answer is yes. Its NSW Remote Working Insights Paper says the level of remote work will remain above pre-COVID levels permanently, and that 66 per cent of employees who have worked remotely want to keep doing so.

However, there are barriers preventing the wider adoption of remote working:

- some tasks can't be done remotely such as the work of Prison Officers
- there are difficulties collaborating or sharing on-the-job knowledge
- the negative mental health impacts of social isolation.

These barriers are why only five per cent of people can do all their job all of the time at home. However, more than half of all employees can work from home some of the time. The Council believes a hybrid model, with two days of remote work each week will overcome most problems.

The research shows two days of home work per week benefits the employee, employers and society generally. Employees gain the equivalent of 3.3 weeks' leave a year and \$860 in savings by commuting less. The extra time is used for personal and family activities, helping them achieve a

better work-life balance. Employers benefit from a 13 per cent productivity boost from their employees. And society benefits from reduced traffic congestion which is a drag on economic efficiency, less pollution, improved community health and a lessening of the pressure on social infrastructure such as hospitals and public transport.

People in professional and administrative roles are the most enthusiastic about the hybrid model with 45 per cent indicating they want to work remotely three or more days a week. By contrast, 21 per cent of education and 17 per cent of health employees do not want to work remotely.

Sydneysiders are also more enthusiastic about a hybrid remote work system, with 72 per cent wanting to work remotely for more than one day, compared to 59 per cent of regional remote workers.

### Dangers to mental and physical health

Working from home for long periods of time tends to blur the lines between professional and personal time. It can leave some people feeling as if they are 'always on' and unable to 'switch off'. The result is increased stress and negative emotions, together with a loss of work-life balance.

A lack of opportunities to socialise

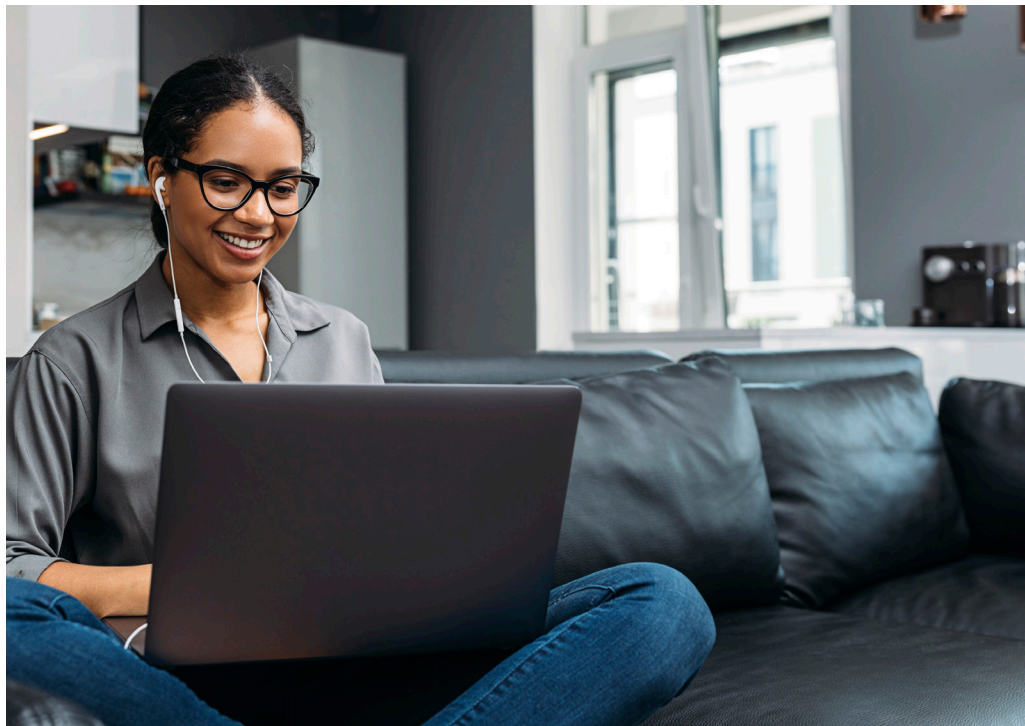
ranked as the worst aspect of remote work in the Council's research, followed by negative impacts on working relationships. This lack of face-to-face interaction can cause loneliness, which can damage a person's health, happiness and productivity.

The responsibility employers have for the health and safety of their employees continue regardless of where the employee works. This includes mental as well as the physical health of the employee. Managers need to be aware of the impact extended periods of remote work can have and be vigilant for signs an employee may be struggling, such as changed behaviour and a failure to properly disengage from work at the end of the day.

The Council has a clear message for NSW Government policymakers; "The social implications of remote working need to be examined carefully."

The hybrid model is designed to reduce the risk of social isolation and the resulting mental health issues. As the report says, "We like remote work, but we also value working together in person."

This 'hybrid model' takes remote work's best aspects, and combines them with the benefits of gathering together in one location." ■





# PSA AND CPSU NSW MEMBERS ARE CHAMPIONS OF THE STATE



**A**ll over the state, PSA and CPSU NSW members are vital cogs in keeping NSW running. Your union's members are out there every day, working to make NSW a better place. Featured here are just some of our Champions of the State. Log onto the PSA Facebook page to see more of your fellow members doing their bit for a better NSW.



**KIM** is a Prison Officer. Her role is one that supports inmates with complex medical problems and mental health needs and is one that requires a high level of interpersonal skills, communication and the ability to adapt to challenging behaviours. Kim keeps inmates safe and in doing so keeps our community safe.



**BROOK** is an Operations Manager with TAFE NSW, an organisation that has always set the benchmark for quality training. TAFE is open to all Australians, including disadvantaged or disengaged groups, helping them take up rewarding careers. With NSW in economic strife, TAFE NSW has never been more important.



**BEN** is a Ranger with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). All NPWS staff play an essential role in managing, promoting and protecting the conservation and heritage of our national parks, nature reserves, historic sites and regional parks in NSW. NPWS manages more than 850 reserves covering more than eight per cent of NSW.



**KAREN** is a School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) in Rathmines, just south of Newcastle. There are thousands of SLSOs, all essential workers, working in NSW public schools and making a huge difference in the lives of children. SLSOs support students with disability and additional learning and support needs.





# WHAT WOMEN WANT REPORT RELEASED

**Research report identifies top issues for the majority of members in our sector.**

**W**omen want greater workplace flexibility to manage family responsibilities without sacrificing their career. This is the key finding of the PSA/CPSU NSW's inaugural What Women Want Report.

More than 5000 respondents participated in the research which was conducted in the first half of 2020.

Chair of the Women's Council, Ms Trish O'Brien, said the research was undertaken as part of the Women's Council's 90th anniversary commemorations.

"The majority of our members are women. They work in industries where the majority of employees are women."

"This report showcases the work our members do and their pride in looking after people in NSW. But it also shows how problems such as bullying, harassment and discrimination are widespread in workplaces and are not being addressed."

"The report gives women in the public sector a say on the issues that affect them and what they want our union to focus on, such as job security, flexibility, equal pay, training and advancement," Ms O'Brien said.

General Secretary of the PSA/CPSU NSW, Mr Stewart Little, said the report will

be used to set priorities for the union. "The women of our union, aided by our Women's Council, are at the forefront of our plans. This report will guide our way as we grow as a union," Mr Little said.

According to the report, the top six issues for women are:

## **FLEXIBLE WORK**

The report found 37 per cent of survey respondents are responsible for the care of others. Thirty-two per cent have at least one dependent child under the age of 18 and many are 'sandwich' carers providing childcare and elder care simultaneously.

Managing both paid work and unpaid domestic work makes flexibility a priority issue. They rely on the ability to access leave when needed (82 per cent) and having flexible work hours (80 per cent). The ability to work from home or off-site during normal work hours is also important for 53 per cent of respondents.

More than half (56 per cent) requested access to flexible work arrangements and 87 per cent had their request met. This implies an understanding in the workplace that women need flexibility to meet their caring responsibilities. Of those refused flexible work, 20 per cent were given no reason and 42 per cent were refused due to operational requirements.

Flexible work arrangements allow women to have a sustainable career. As one member said, "The ability to access flexible work arrangements... has meant I haven't had to reduce my work time and inevitably be the one to sacrifice my career."

## **PAY EQUITY**

The gender pay gap in the NSW public service has doubled since 2018 to \$2,002 a year. This gap exists because male graduates are paid more, the work and skills of women are undervalued, and workplace practices restrict the employment prospects of women. There are also fewer women in the higher salary bands

Only half of women are aware of the gender pay gap with many respondents saying they were surprised to learn it still existed in the public sector.

The research found 73 per cent are unsure if their employer is doing anything to address pay equity and only 10 per cent think their employer is trying to fix it.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE**

PSA/CPSU NSW members work in a variety of workplaces, from schools to prisons to offices to farms. Each has its own mental health challenges. The report states a key difference in the way men and women responded to mental health issues is that women are more likely to report it and seek help.

There are a number of workplace issues that can impact a person's mental health. For example, improved job security is associated with decreased depression and anxiety.

Budget constraints also impact on the type and quality of support employers can put in place to reduce the risk of mental health problems.



## CAREER PROGRESSION

Training is the key to career development and advancement. In the past 12 months, 30 per cent of respondents had one or two days training and another 27 per cent had three to five days.

However, 24 per cent had received less than one day of training in the year and 17 per cent had a training request denied.

The most common reason for refusing a training request was staff constraints (33 per cent) followed by cost (26 per cent) and budget constraints (21 per cent). One in five respondents who were refused a training request have never been given a reason by their manager. Some women reported being told not to bother applying as there is no budget for training.

The policy of the NSW Government is to promote professional development as a way of creating a positive culture and increasing skill levels. Yet survey respondents said the attitude of many managers is that workers should not expect to have their training paid for by their employer.

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

A substantial majority of women feel extremely safe (23 per cent) or safe (52 per cent) at work. Of the remainder, six per cent feel unsafe and slightly more than one per cent do not feel safe at all. In other words, one in every 13 women members feels unsafe in the workplace – a completely unacceptable situation.

The main reasons women feel unsafe are management actions (65 per cent), bullying and sexual harassment (58 per cent) and unsafe work practices (34 per cent).

More than 43 per cent of women members have experienced bullying in the workplace in the last 12 months, but the majority did not report it. Of the members that made a report, 62 per cent were not satisfied with the response. Less than one in 10 (nine per cent) said they were satisfied with the way their employer responded to their complaint.

## SUPERANNUATION

Superannuation balances are lower for women because they are more likely to be in lower paying jobs and may have taken time away from work to care for family members (For more information on the issues members have with superannuation, see the adjoining article.) ■



## ONLY ONE IN EIGHT WOMEN HAVE ENOUGH SUPER

**Less than 13 per cent of women surveyed have enough super, according to the inaugural What Women Want Report on women in our industry.**

**T**he report found almost 60 per cent of women surveyed are not confident they will have enough superannuation to retire comfortably.

With the lump sum needed to support a comfortable lifestyle in retirement estimated at \$545,000 for a single person and \$640,000 for a couple, many women believe they are dependent on their partner's income and superannuation balance.

The report identified a lack of

awareness among women members on how to best organise their superannuation to maximise their income in retirement. Of the more than 5000 workers who took part in the report, 15 per cent do not know how much superannuation they have and 64 per cent have never been to an information session or received any training about their superannuation. Only one in 10 self-manage their superannuation accounts.

More than 68 per cent do not salary sacrifice into their superannuation fund.

According to Women in Super, a not-for-profit organisation that works to improve women's retirement outcomes, women live five years longer than men but currently retire with 47 per cent less superannuation. Four in 10 single retired women live in poverty and experience economic insecurity. ■

## SUPER STRATEGIES

Jodie Heydon, from Aware Super, says there are some strategies the Federal Government can follow now to address the superannuation imbalance:

- Remove the \$450 minimum monthly wage for super contributions
- Pay super on parental leave for 12 months (for both parents)
- Provide deeper subsidies on childcare (and tax deductibility)
- Contribute \$1000 annually to super accounts of women and low income earners

- Allow couples to equalise their super
- Pay domestic violence leave so women aren't forced to stay in abusive relationships
- Improve access to accurate super fund information for separating spouses for less contentious super splitting
- Increase the superannuation guarantee to 12 per cent in the 2025 timeframe
- Move to a 15 per cent superannuation guarantee by the 2030 timeframe to lift absolute savings for women.



# PLANNING DAY PUTS GENDER ON THE AGENDA



**For 90 years, the PSA CPSU NSW Women's Council has put gender at the heart of the union's agenda, working to improve the status of women members in and out of the workplace.**

**A**s an advisory body to the Central Council and with women representing 65 per cent of members, the Women's Council has been instrumental in many of the union's successes, from equal pay for School and Administrative Support staff through to workplace rights for victims of domestic violence.

With the annual women's conference (as with all PSA/CPSU NSW's regular conferences) unable to be held due to COVID-19, the Women's Council Committee came together in October for a special planning day to set priorities for the next 12 months. More than 30 members representing every part of

the union discussed the security and advancement of women in the workplace after hearing an update on the PSA/CPSU NSW domestic violence response and the What Women Want research.

Ms Trish O'Brien, Chair of the Women's Council, said the need to work from home during the pandemic had made flexible work arrangements a top issue for the Council.

"Flexible work arrangements are an issue across all parts of the union, from members in disabilities, Justice, as well as schools, TAFE and universities. Women want to determine what sort of flexibility is available to them, not what the employer says it should be, but what they want. Women are twice as likely as men to use flexible work arrangements to balance their career with their unpaid caring roles," she said.

"There have been too many examples of employers trying to stop our members accessing flex leave when working remotely. Many local managers are developing policy on the run that is inconsistent with agreements the PSA/CPSU NSW has fought for and won. The current pandemic is not an excuse to

remove core conditions and represents an opportunity to come up with creative solutions, not an excuse to stick in the past with old ideas and limits."

"Flexible work is the key to women having sustainable careers in our industry, yet we are still seeing women refused access to it with no reason given. Often it is the attitude of managers and supervisors that is the biggest obstacle. We know cases where a change in management means flexibility is suddenly available."

Women working in the Justice portfolio joined with members working in schools and disability services to talk about issues of bullying, harassment and violence in the workplace, as well as to plan organising and growth in their areas. The Women's Council recommended the PSA/CPSU NSW make flexible work a priority.

"The discussions really opened our eyes to the issues women in our union have in common. Regardless of where they work, women are challenged by a gender pay gap, unequal access to superannuation and an increased risk of harassment and bullying at work," Ms O'Brien said. ■



# CHANGES TO FEDERAL PAID PARENTAL LEAVE BRINGS GREATER FLEXIBILITY

**One of the signature achievements of Julia Gillard's Prime Ministership was the introduction of a national Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme in 2011. The scheme has made an enormous difference to the lives of working parents and their babies. It allows parents to spend crucial time in the early years of their child's life while maintaining an important connection with their work.**

**T**he scheme originally provided for 18 weeks' paid leave in one continuous block. This has been changed to give parents greater flexibility on when they choose to take their time off to be with their newborn.

Employees whose child was born or adopted on or after 1 July 2020 gained access to:

- a continuous Paid Parental Leave period of up to 12 weeks (60 days)
- 30 Flexible Paid Parental Leave days which can be taken up until the child turns two.

It is still possible to take 18 weeks' continuous leave if the 30 flexible days are taken straight after the 12-week leave period.

This parental leave is paid at the minimum wage. You may also be entitled to paid parental leave from your employer, which may include both paid and unpaid time off work for a total of 12 months. There are "keep in touch" provisions with the PPL scheme to make the return to work easier, too.

The qualifying period to access maternity leave can vary depending on your Award or Enterprise Agreement. Your Award or Agreement may refer to 'maternity' or 'parental' or 'primary carer's' leave.

If you are not the birth parent, you may also be entitled to some combination of the Federal

Government's Dad and Partner Pay (DAPP) or paid parental leave from your employer to stay with your family after your child is born. You may have access to both. As with PPL, this differs depending on your Award or Enterprise Agreement. It may refer to "paternity" leave, or in some other way to indicate this is leave for the non-primary carer or non-birth parent.

**THE SCHEME HAS MADE AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF WORKING PARENTS AND THEIR BABIES**

Each Award and Enterprise Agreement is different and might express the payment and leave type differently. If you or your partner are expecting a baby and you're unsure about what sort of parental leave or payment you are eligible for, contact your Delegate, Organiser or the Member Support Centre on 1300 772 679 for more information.

"These benefits are an important part of letting parents balance work and family," said PSA/CPSU NSW General Secretary Stewart Little. "The union is here to give advice if anyone is daunted by the legislation." ■





## Public Service Association of NSW Election of Executive Officers and Delegates to Central Council

### Election Notice

#### NOMINATIONS

Nominations are hereby invited on and from Wednesday 20 January 2021 for the following positions:

- **General Secretary**
- **Assistant General Secretary**
- **President**
- **3 Vice-Presidents**
- **39 Delegates to Central Council**

#### QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates must be financial members of the Association as at 7 clear days prior to the opening of nominations; or be on the Executive of the NSW Branch of the State Public Services Federation (SPSF); or for the positions of General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary may be employees of the PSA or the SPSF; and must be nominated by at least two members (other than the candidate) of the PSA and who are financial as at 7 clear days prior to the opening of nominations. No person may nominate more candidates than the number to be elected for each position.

Nomination forms, Candidate Information Sheets, Grouping forms and Scrutineer Appointment forms are available from:

- NSW Electoral Commission's website at [www.elections.nsw.gov.au](http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au); or
- The Public Service Association of NSW, telephone 1300 772 679.

#### LODGE MENT OF NOMINATIONS

Lodgement of a correctly completed nomination form, by the specified time, is the responsibility of the candidate. Completed nomination forms must be received by the Returning Officer, NSW Electoral Commission by no later than **12.00 noon, Wednesday 17 February 2021**. A candidate may only withdraw his/her nomination in writing so as to be received by the Returning Officer prior to the close of nominations. Any defect in a nomination form must be rectified by the candidate prior to the close of nominations.

Completed nomination forms can only be lodged with the Returning Officer by one the following methods:

- email: [ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au)
- post: PO Box 693 Grosvenor Place NSW 1220
- hand deliver: NSW Electoral Commission, level 3, 231 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Note: The NSW Electoral Commission's office is currently closed to the public due to COVID-19 related public health requirements and NSWEC staff may be working from home. To ensure a NSWEC staff member is in attendance and to gain access to the office, please make an appointment via email [ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au) or telephone (02) 9290 5960.

Should more than the required number of nominations be received a draw will be conducted to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot paper at the NSW Electoral Commission at 3.00pm, Wednesday 17 February 2021. Candidates or their representatives are invited to witness the draw. Please email [ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au) if you intend to witness the draw and the number of attendees.

#### CANDIDATE INFORMATION SHEET

A candidate may complete a Candidate Information Sheet, details from which will displayed on the NSW Electoral Commission's website for the information of voters.

#### GROUPING OF CANDIDATES

Two or more candidates nominated for an election in which more than one person is to be elected, may by notice in writing to the Returning Officer before the close of nominations, request:

- (i) to have their names included in a group in the ballot papers to be used in that election; and
- (ii) to have their names included in that group in the order specified in that request.

Candidates wishing to have their names included in a group must lodge a Grouping form with the Returning Officer by no later than 12.00 noon, Wednesday 17 February 2021.

#### LODGING OF GROUP VOTING TICKETS

Candidates included in a group may lodge one or two group voting tickets with the Returning Officer by no later than 12.00 noon, Thursday 18 February 2021.

#### ROLL OF MEMBERS

Candidates may request a copy of the certified roll. Requests must be made in writing and lodged with the Returning Officer by no later than the close of nominations **12.00 noon, Wednesday 17 February 2021**. Conditions apply.

#### SCRUTINEERS

Candidates may be represented by scrutineers at the mailing out of the ballot papers, daily PO box clearance of returned envelopes, daily mark off against the roll and the counting of the votes after the close of poll. Scrutineers must be nominated by the candidate in writing to the Returning Officer so as to be received by no later than the close of nominations **12.00 noon, Wednesday 17 February 2021**. A scrutineer shall not be a candidate in any of the ballots being contested.

#### VOTING

All members of the PSA of NSW financial as at **12.00 noon, Wednesday 17 February 2021** and entitled to vote will be sent ballot papers on **Wednesday 10 March 2021**.

As voting material will be posted to each member's residential address, members should ensure that the PSA has their current residential address.

The poll will close at **12.00 noon, Wednesday 7 April 2021**.

Enquiries should be directed to Andrea Jackson at the NSW Electoral Commission on telephone (02) 9290 5960 or [ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ballots@elections.nsw.gov.au)

Greg Copson  
Returning Officer  
**NSW Electoral Commission**





## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS 2021

### Retired Associates Group Election

Nominations are hereby called for the following positions on the Retired Associates Group Executive Committee.

- President
- Senior Vice President
- Junior Vice President
- Secretary
- Assistant Secretary
- Welfare Officer
- Women's Contact Officer
- Executive Committee Member (6)

Persons nominated must be members of the above branch and be financial members of the Association as at **18 January 2021**.

#### NOMINATIONS AND CLOSING DATE:

Each nomination must be seconded by two other persons from the branch who are financial members of the Association as at **18 January 2021**.

Nominations must be submitted via Survey Monkey [www.surveymonkey.com/r/RetiredAssociatesGroup\\_2021](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RetiredAssociatesGroup_2021)  
The Survey Monkey link for nominations will be emailed to all eligible members on **Wednesday, 20 January 2021**.

Nominations will close on Wednesday, 17 February 2021. Forms must be completed via Survey Monkey by **5pm on Wednesday, 17 February 2021**.

If there is a ballot, candidates who wish to have a profile available for voters to read should provide a brief statement of 300 words or less stating how they will best represent members' interests.

Space is provided for this purpose on the form available through Survey Monkey.

**J Campbell**  
for **G R Bensley**  
Deputy Returning Officer



## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS 2021

### Prison Officers (Vocational Branch) Advisory Group

#### Election of State Executive 2021-2023

Nominations are hereby called for the following positions on the State Executive of the Prison Officers (Vocational Branch) Advisory Group.

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Country Vice Chair (2)
- Overseer Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Assistant Secretary

Persons nominated must be members of the above branch and be financial members of the Association as at 18 January 2021.

#### NOMINATIONS AND CLOSING DATE:

Each nomination must be seconded by two other persons from the branch who are financial members of the Association as at **18 January 2021**.

Nominations must be submitted via Survey Monkey [www.surveymonkey.com/r/StateExecutive\\_POVB\\_2021](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StateExecutive_POVB_2021)

The Survey Monkey link for nominations will be emailed to all eligible members on **Monday, 25 January 2021**.

Nominations will close on **Sunday, 7 February 2021**. Forms must be completed via Survey Monkey by **5pm on 7 February 2021**.

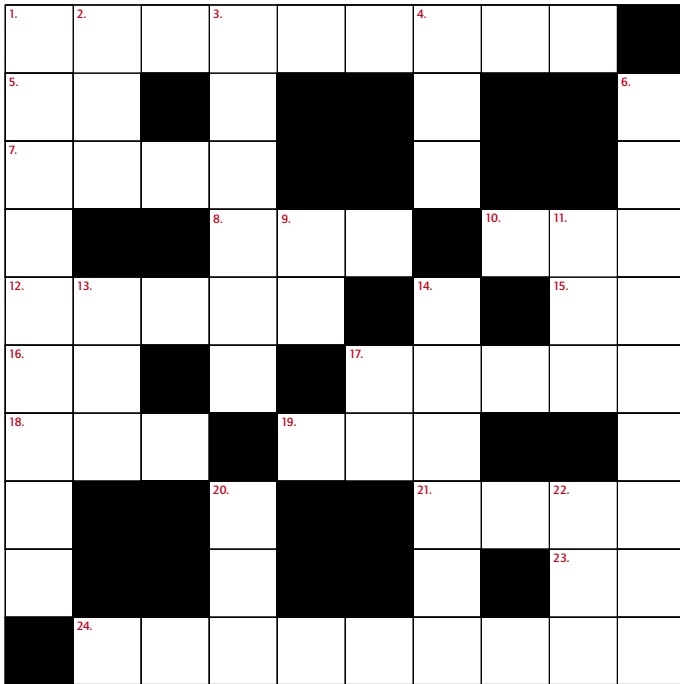
If there is a ballot, candidates who wish to have a profile available for voters to read should provide a brief statement of 300 words or less stating how they will best represent members' interests.

Space is provided for this purpose on the form available through Survey Monkey.

**J Campbell**  
for **G R Bensley**  
Deputy Returning Officer



# CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

1. The flaming disasters that kicked off 2020 (9)
5. Used by a speaker to refer to himself or herself and one or more other people (2)
7. Close by (4)
8. Regret (3)
10. The result of one too many behind the wheel (1,1,1)
12. Poker player's call as they bet entire stake (3,2)
15. Chemical symbol for tin (2)
16. Before COVID-19, this was what made you unpopular on a crowded train (1,1)
17. Soviet bloc prison camp (5)
18. Big North American deer (3)
19. Sick (3)
21. Lacking in colour (4)
23. Word used in comparison (2)
24. Architect of the 2020 pay freeze (9)

## DOWN

1. Queensland town famed for its rum distillery (9)
2. Deploy (3)
3. New American Vice-President's surname (6)
4. PSA's colour (3)
6. Has the shortest arms and deepest pockets (9)
9. Global organisation headed by Labor figure H.V. Evatt in the 1940s (1,1)
11. Country that ditched Trump in 2020 (1,1,1)
13. Online expression of mirth (1,1,1)
14. Where preaching occurs (6)
17. Greenland's internet code (2)
20. Golfing aspiration (3)
22. PNG's second city (3)

Last issue's solution

P	O	W	E	R	H	O	U	S	E
A		A		S		N	A	M	
R	E	V	O	L	V	E		P	
R		E		E		C	W	A	
A	S	S	E	S		P		T	
M		T		F	E	T	C	H	
A	R	C		C		U		I	
T			R	A	V	I	N	E	S
T	E	A		L		I		E	
A	M	B	U	L	A	N	C	E	S



## SUPPORTING YOUR SUPPORTERS

**Meet the team that helps your union help you.**

Being part of a union is a lot about support when you need it. And the Industrial Support team makes sure that help members receive is backed up by expert advice and research. "We have a diverse team here, running training and elections, researching policy, writing submissions and ensuring the union properly represents

its diverse membership," said Industrial Support Manager Shay Deguara. "Other than training, members may not come into direct contact with our team but we are working hard for them."

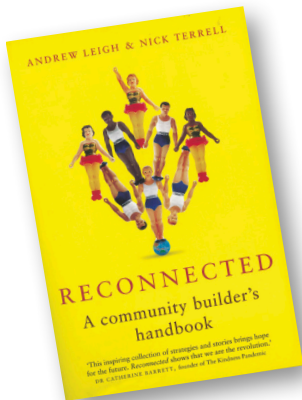
The Industrial Support team includes the Aboriginal and Women's Industrial Officers, who ensure the

union best represents female and First Nations members. It also organises elections for groups such as departmental committees, Women's Council, advisory groups and gaol sub-branches.

Training for union members is also provided by three members of the Industrial Support team. ■



## BOOK REVIEWS



## RECONNECTED: A COMMUNITY BUILDER'S HANDBOOK

Andrew Leigh and Nick Terrell  
Black Inc Books  
\$32.99

Leading up to the pandemic, Australians were healthier and wealthier than any previous generations. But this has been accompanied by a loss of social cohesion. As the authors state, we have fewer close acquaintances and are more alienated from our neighbours; regardless of how many Facebook “friends” we have.

Australians are not as likely to join clubs, unions and other places where they can meet the people around them.

*Reconnected* talks about a number of moves that are reversing this trend of social isolation, including some union initiatives to get chronically under-represented – and hence underpaid – young hospitality workers unionised and protected at work.

Other chapters talk about ways to increase volunteering – and subsequently socialisation – in communities, as well as music venues getting attendees off smartphones. ■



## ANN WELDON NAMED ELDER OF THE YEAR

**PSA/CPSU NSW  
Aboriginal Liaison  
Officer Ann Weldon  
has been named Elder  
of the Year at the  
Dreamtime Awards.**

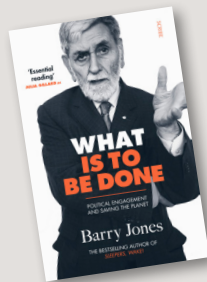
**M**s Weldon was awarded the title at the ceremony, which celebrates First Nations achievements in the sporting, business, cultural and media fields.

“I was totally shocked when it was announced,” she said. “It is such an honour.

“It was fantastic being among so many high-profile Aboriginal people.”

A Wiradjuri woman, Ms Weldon has been the PSA/CPSU NSW Aboriginal Liaison Officer for four years.

“We’ve long known how helpful Ann has been to our First Nations members,” said General Secretary Stewart Little. “It is great she has been acknowledged by the wider community.” ■



## WHAT IS TO BE DONE

Barry Jones  
Scribe Publications  
\$35

Former ALP Science Minister – and TV quiz show champion – Barry Jones (pictured above campaigning in 2001) is regarded as a National Living Treasure and was well regarded on both sides of politics as someone who brought intellectual vigour to government in the 1980s. In his latest book, the 88-year-old Mr Jones has issued a warning call

to a world facing a climate emergency, a pandemic and a democracy crisis.

Mr Jones discusses the fact that when the world is in dire need of critical, analytical thinking and an acknowledgement of some uncomfortable truths, it has instead descended into a morass of Trumpian anti-intellectualism and bald-faced lies designed to reassure rather than inform. He finds that while the problems we face require a unified, community response, we have instead been overcome by an unprecedented level of self-absorption fed by social media and the ubiquitous smartphone.

As a government minister Mr Jones always had a talent for breaking down big intellectual concepts. *What Is To Be Done* continues this, conveying bigger issues without intimidating the average reader.





# STAY SAFE

## WHS issues take centre stage

**R**ecognising that mental health and workplace safety are huge issues for members, the PSA/CPSU Training Unit has included the subjects in its arsenal of training courses.

“In the Mental Health sessions we look at information, strategies and resources that can help support people with mental health issues and encourage them to seek professional help,” said Training Officer Suzanne Mann (pictured). “We also look at some useful strategies to manage stress and build personal resilience.”

The PSA/CPSU NSW can also train Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs).

“Our new one-hour webinar talks you through how to get HSRs in your workplace and how those HSRs can build collective strength through WHS,” said Ms Mann.

“This session is suitable for anyone interested in learning more about HSRs, becoming a HSR, or existing HSRs interested in building union strength through WHS.



“We can provide HSRs with the SafeWork NSW-accredited five-day training course and the one-day refresher.”

Ms Mann enjoys leading the Mental Health and WHS courses as they “empower people through education”, creating “a safe space to talk about mental health”.

“I am always touched by members’ willingness to contribute to sessions, and to share their experiences and useful strategies with others,” she said. “We do discuss suicide and suicide prevention, and ask that participants be mindful of their own mental health when choosing these courses.” ■

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Training is free to all PSA/CPSU NSW members
- Nearly all PSA/CPSU NSW members can access Union Training Leave, so no need to dip into your holiday time
- Courses are delivered online, at PSA House in Sydney or in regional centres
- You can read more at [psa.asn.au/training-you](http://psa.asn.au/training-you)

JANUARY-  
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