



UNION HISTORY

1850-1900

This period saw the early development of Australian trade unions. Legislation had existed in Britain that outlawed unions, similar to the Masters and Servants Act, until the passing of the Trade Union Act in 1871.

1856 The 8 Hour Day Movement is formed.

1871 The Sydney Trades and Labor Council formed.

1881 The N.S.W. Trade Union Act is passed giving union rights and registration.

1891 The Shearer's Union strike over freedom of contract.

1900-1939

The experience of the 1890's convinced unionists that legislation establishing Arbitration and Conciliation Courts was required. In 1904 the Australian Labour Federation was formed, the first Labor government in the world was elected in Queensland and the first federal Labor Government was formed in 1904.

1904 Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission established.

1907 The Minimum Basic Wage is established by Mr Justice Higgins in the Harvester Award.

1927 ACTU is formed.

1930 Women are receiving 54% of male wage rates.

1939-1983

World War II had a big impact on the Australian workforce. Women entered the workforce in large numbers and, for the first time, many earned wages close to male rates. Large scale post-war migration started to change the nature of the workforce and Australian culture. The short term of the Whitlam Labor Government (72-75) saw a number of significant reforms including equal pay (in principle).

1939 Workbased child care facilities are provided and most receive 90% of male rates.

1941 Annual Leave of one week becomes standard.

1945 Two weeks annual leave is introduced.

1963 Annual Leave of 3 weeks becomes standard.

1969 The ACTU's Equal Pay Case paves the way for women to receive pay equal to that of men performing same duties by 1975.

1973 Four weeks annual leave.

1979 The right of women workers to 12 months unpaid maternity leave is achieved.

1983-1999

The Accord between the ACTU and the ALP, and the election of a Federal Labor Government in 1983 ushered in a new phase in industrial relations. Unions become involved in tripartite processes and significant changes were made to industrial relations legislation. Maternity leave, superannuation and later, family leave became award entitlements. A policy of strategic unionism was adopted which saw the amalgamation of some 300 unions into 20 "super" unions. Enterprise bargaining became the main avenue for wage increases.

1984 *Job Protection Case.* National Occupational Health & Safety Commission is established.

1986 *The Accord Mark 2.* Introduction of universal superannuation for Australian workers.

1992 ACTU wins Parental Leave test case.

1995 Jennie George elected as first woman President of the ACTU. ACTU wins Personal Carers' Leave Test case.

1996 Conservative Howard Government elected-introduces Workplace Relations Act, reducing workers entitlements under awards and severely limiting unions' capacity to organize and pursue members' interests.

1999 Second wave of anti-union legislation from the Howard Government is defeated by a combination of union and community activity