



Stat Report 2014/18

Industrial Landscape in 2014

There are many challenges facing workers in Victoria's health system.

We have seen just in a few short years how the Victorian Government has transformed our public health system into one that is less capable of dealing with the ever increasing demands placed on it. We've seen the Napthine Government push hard to reduce our professions essential involvement in healthcare by dumbing down the workforce.

Nationally, we're witnessing the single biggest attack on universal healthcare with the Abbott Government's first budget introducing co-payments to visit the GP, additional payments for pathology tests and prescription medicines, and slashing up to \$80 billion in health and hospitals funding.

These attacks on health care by the state and federal governments simply cannot lead to improvements in health outcomes for Victorians and we know that there is nothing in these measures that will make our universal healthcare system more sustainable.

If anything these attacks will undermine our universal healthcare system, leaving the poor and vulnerable members of our community paying more to meet their basic healthcare needs.

We also know that making healthcare more expensive will lead to more people deciding to not see their doctor; they will not get all the medicines they need; or be less inclined to seek help for mental health concerns. These measures will drastically increase the strain on hospitals as more people front up to emergency departments for minor and major health problems.

But there are not just the social impacts from the decisions made by the Victorian and federal governments in their respective budgets; there are serious industrial and professional issues too.

We are facing an industrial environment that is becoming more and more hostile as employers have become emboldened by the Abbott government. While we've heard very little from the Abbott Government about industrial relations we need only look to the Budget to see the kind of industrial agenda being formulated.

We've been told that industrial relations won't be changed and any proposal for change will be taken to the next election. But after hearing the untruths from the Abbott Government about the Budget, we have to be very wary of anything said about industrial relations. So we must be ever ready for the Abbott Government to arbitrarily introduce changes to industrial relations laws, just like he introduced GP co-payments and deregulated higher education fees despite stridently denying the government was considering such proposals.

Let's not forget the draconian recommendations made by his business "mates" in the Commission of Audit Report.

The tragedy of the Budget is that it disproportionately attacks the lowest paid workers in

Australia, the poor, and most vulnerable. And it also attacks key areas like higher education, science and research. Although what should we expect from a Prime Minister that didn't see the need for a Minister for Science.

This can only be made worse as we see more employers trying to cut their own budgets. We're witnessing employers cutting scientists, psychologists and pharmacists while expecting those who are left to do more and more work. It's a recipe for disaster and creates unsafe and unhealthy workplaces.

The Abbott Government also currently has legislation before Parliament to expand the role of so-called "individual flexibility agreements". These statutory tools, created under the former Labor government, allow an employer and employee to depart from legally defined minimum conditions. These agreements don't have to be pre-approved by the Fair Work Commission; and enforcement is only ever determined if an employee has the resources to sue their employer.

The Abbott Government wants to change the test so that "non-monetary" benefits can be taken into account when an employer determines if their employee is better off overall. Does a flu shot allow them to deduct \$25 from your wages? If your employer insists on part-paying you in kind with their health services, do you dare refuse? Of course, you can't pay your landlord or electricity company with health services, but that's no concern of Tony Abbott's.

In turn, of course, this will help drive down wages and conditions for everyone.

Across the public and private health systems we're seeing more cracks appearing; and the cracks that already existed are getting bigger and bigger. A thousand cuts and frequent changes in policy direction are part of the problem; as too are the cavalier attitudes of some employers about their role.

It seems many think their role is to be a business rather than a vital part of keeping Victorians healthy.

The Union will keep fighting these cuts and the attacks on our professional and industrial conditions. But to ensure we're the strongest we can be it means we must continue to grow our Union.

No Pay? No Way!

During the Annual Conference, the Union flagged the development of its latest workplace campaign – *No Pay? No Way! Unpaid Work-free Zone*

Many of you may remember this was a major part of the public sector campaign during the last round of enterprise bargaining in the public sector. However it is obvious a major trend is erupting in public and private health by loading workers with high expectations that they will do unpaid work. As a result hundreds of thousands of hours of unpaid time is being worked every year.

With such high expectations many healthcare workers are unwittingly allowing managers to cut budgets further and add more pressure to already over-worked staff. This is a recipe for disaster for burn out and for errors to creep into our work, which could have a significant impact on patients.

Over the coming weeks you will see more about this campaign in STAT Report and in your workplaces.

The *We Are Union* Campaign

We Are Union is a campaign by Victorian Trades Hall Council to encourage more union activism! The campaign is all about protecting our rights at work; the rights we have fought for and won as union members and that we all deserve to enjoy.

Tony Abbott as our Prime Minister is not the outcome we were striving for in the Federal Election, but our endeavours have meant that our movement is stronger than ever.

And Victorian workers are now uniting for change.

We want a state government that respects healthcare and health workers, not one that cuts jobs and services.

The "Bust the Budget" rally showed the continuing anger about the state and federal budgets and their impacts on poor and vulnerable Victorians. The Union is strongly supporting this campaign and working with Trades Hall to make sure we are campaigning hard on a range of issues that affect working people.

Help take on Denis Napthine in 2014 by volunteering at weareunion.org.au/volunteer

ACTU National Women's Conference

The 2014 ACTU National Women's Conference is a 2 day conference primarily aimed at women unionists but also open to a broader network of individuals and organisations working to improve the lives of working women.

The conference will identify the current political and industrial challenges facing working women and develop key industrial, organising and campaign priorities and action plans.

There will be a focus on developing strategies to mobilise union, political and community support for campaign priorities as well as on developing practical organising, campaign and leadership skills.

When: 21 to 22 August

Where: City Convention Centre – 300 Flinders Street, Melbourne

Speakers include:

- The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition
- Ged Kearney, President Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, ITUC

To register for the conference or for the Anna Stewart Memorial Dinner visit:

<http://www.cvent.com/events/2014-actu-national-women-s-conference-and-anna-stewart-memorial-dinner/event-summary-bb60995bdd24479ba4c41dc03a94f04b.aspx>

Senate Inquiry into Australia's Innovation System

The Union is very clear about the importance of science to Australia, especially for the ongoing healthcare needs of all Australians, and will be making a submission to the Inquiry.

In order to prepare the Union's submission to this Inquiry, a special meeting of interested members will be convened on 16 July at 4pm at the Union's offices in Carlton. If you're interested in attending this meeting please contact Alex Schlotzer on 9623 9623 or at alexs@msav.org.au

We strongly encourage individual members to make their own submission.

Submissions to the Inquiry close on 31 July 2014.

For more details about this important Inquiry and to make a submission visit:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Innovation_System

Union's Submission Meeting

Date: 16 July

Time: 4pm to 5pm
Location: Level 1, 62 Lygon Street
RSVP: alexs@msav.org.au

2014 FACTA Workshop: Prescription Drugs: Analysis and Behavioural Effects

The 2014 FACTA workshop will be held on September 5, 2014 in Adelaide, South Australia directly following the 22nd International Symposium on the Forensic Sciences of the Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society.

Professor Jan Ramaekers, Psychopharmacologist from The Netherlands who is Head of the Department of Neuropsychology and Psychopharmacology, Maastricht University (The Netherlands) will be the key speaker at the workshop.

Professor Ramaekers has conducted a large number of experimental studies on the effects of medicinal drugs, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, anxiolytics, anticonvulsants and antihistamines on cognition, psychomotor function and actual driving performance of healthy volunteers and patients and is well placed to talk about behavioural effects of prescription drugs.

The workshop will also feature speakers talking about the difficulties associated with prescription drugs in our community.

Registration is now open until 1st August 2014.

People can register online and get more information about the Workshop at www.facta.org.au

Worth Reading: "IR debate hijacked by the right"

Let's be blunt. The industrial relation pendulum has swung too far one way. There is almost no doubt the Fair Work Act (FWA), introduced by the ALP in 2009, has seen the IR pendulum, as it was under WorkChoices stay massively swung in favour of the bosses.

The IR debate in this country has long been a complete farce. We are told we need IR "reform" because of productivity and competitiveness, because the militant unions have too much power.

But it's a fib.

Continue reading this article by Greg Jericho on The Drum at:
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-11/jericho-ir-debate-hijacked-by-the-right/5512754>

"Co-payment FOI request denied"

THE architect of the government's controversial co-payment plan has backed a thwarted Freedom of Information (FOI) request to release more detailed Medicare data into the public domain.

Speaking to MO, Tony Abbott's former advisor Terry Barnes said his co-payment model, and criticisms of it, are based on "educated guesswork" until the information is released.

The request was made by the Australian Health and Hospitals Association (AHHA) to the Department of Human Services and asked for detailed data on the number of people who are bulk-billed, as distinct from the number of services that are bulk-billed. It was knocked back on two grounds.

Continue reading this article by Flynn Murphy at Medical Observer at:
<http://www.medicalobserver.com.au/news/co-payment-foi-request-denied>

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Get Active! Help change Victoria!

Volunteer at: <http://www.weareunion.org.au/volunteer>

Benefits for Union Members

As a union member, you can take advantage of the collective buying power of more than 1.9 million members to get discounts on a great range of products and services.

ACTU Member Connect makes sure the products and services are from companies you can rely on to deliver high-quality products with reliable customer service.

There is more information about a range of other benefits union members can access at <http://www.memberconnect.com.au/> or you can call ACTU Member Connect on 1300 362 223.

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If not print out a copy and leave it on the noticeboard or in the staff room for your colleagues.



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