

Our union blueprint for action

A bold and enduring working class agenda



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Introduction

Forging a future of dignity and collective power

The AMWU's vision is a future where work is not just a source of income, but a foundation of dignity and security.

The dignity of work is a fundamental principle of our movement. We believe that work is more than a means to an end; it is a source of identity, purpose and self-respect. Workers are the true source of all wealth, and their labour must be honoured, not exploited.

Every person has the right to be free from exploitation and to be treated with respect and equity. This dignity is only possible when we empower workers with the collective strength of a union, a voice that cannot be silenced. By organising and bargaining collectively, we level the playing field and ensure the wealth we create is shared justly.

We deserve a future where our labour is valued, our rights are protected, and our collective strength guarantees a life of dignity for all.

We demand a worker-centric industrial policy that prioritises human value over corporate profit, and uses the power of the state to build a truly sovereign and sustainable economy. This is a battle for the soul and future of our nation — a collective effort to reclaim our industrial future and ensure that every Australian can thrive.

Policy is power

Building a future for everyone

The AMWU uses its power in the labour movement to develop good policy, take it into government, and deliver meaningful change for workers.

When we speak about ‘social justice’, we are talking about a society where everyone benefits, not just the rich. Policy is the tool we use to lock that in. This blueprint isn’t a polite request; it is a working-class instruction to the government on how to build a society that actually works for all of us.

We create the wealth

We reject the idea that policy is a bureaucratic exercise for people in suits. We demand a system that integrates the voices of those who create all wealth: the workers.

Top-down mandates by big business and their political mates have consistently failed our nation. This approach doesn’t just hurt workers; it manipulates the system to squeeze out profit at the expense of fair wages and the public good.

The government’s job is to establish frameworks that make worker input mandatory, not optional. When policy is built with this shared vision, it won’t just be accepted — it will be owned by the people. That ownership is what makes a gain permanent.

Lasting power

Policies driven by corporate profit and political games will always fail the working class. To be resilient, the implementation of any change must be shaped by those with the most to gain and lose: the workers themselves.

By creating genuine ways for workers and their unions to contribute, lead, and hold power over how rules are applied, we transform policy into a structural force for fairness.

This approach builds working-class resilience. It ensures our wins endure beyond any single election cycle. Good policy must be an instrument of social justice, or it is nothing.



Reclaiming our economic sovereignty

The ‘*Future Made in Australia*’ Act

The \$22.7 billion investment in a *Future Made in Australia* (FMIA) is not just a spending package; it is a profound act of faith in our national interests. This is Labor betting on us, betting on Australian workers, and using our public money to create secure, high-quality jobs — not to subsidise exploitation.

This investment is not charity; it is a reclamation of our national wealth and a strategic strike against the decades of decay that has sought to hollow out our industrial base.

AMWU members will campaign to ensure that safe, secure, high-quality jobs are delivered as a result of this investment.

Finalise and mandate a Secure Jobs Code

We demand that public money be used for public good, and will campaign for a Secure Australian Jobs Code to be integrated into tender processes. We call for a Code that sets a simple, unyielding standard: if you want public money, you must guarantee secure jobs, fair wages and safe conditions.

We call for mandated collective agreements that reflect union rates of pay, using our state’s purchasing power to rebuild our industrial power from the ground up.

Establish a tripartite council

If we are to have a plan for the orderly transformation of our economy, then our voices need to be at the table. We call for the establishment of a *Future Made in Australia Council* with genuine representation, ensuring that workers’ voices are at the heart of every decision about capital investment, skills and industry strategy.

Demanding local content

More local content in energy and infrastructure projects is critical. Public money must explicitly support local industry and create good, well-paid, unionised jobs. We need stronger, more effective local content targets in every single project funded with our taxes. We will not stand by and watch our nation’s wealth be used to enrich overseas capital while our own communities wither on the vine.

The apprentice mandate

Australia cannot rebuild its industrial base whilst employers refuse to train the next generation. Current apprentice requirements are toothless, lacking monitoring and enforcement, allowing too few companies to shoulder this vital responsibility.

AMWU members will campaign for expanded, enforceable and mandated apprentice numbers



across all industries receiving public investment, particularly in manufacturing. Any company benefiting from taxpayer dollars under the *FMIA* must take on apprentices, backed by clear minimums, transparent reporting, and real penalties for non-compliance. We demand an end to subsidising the skills crisis.

Fighting for fair trade

Our industries and our jobs are being undermined by unfair trade. The Anti-Dumping Commission must have the power to protect our industries and our jobs. We call for the establishment of an Independent Advocate for Fair Trade — someone whose job is to stand up for local industry and workers, especially in small businesses, and to defend us from being undercut by cheap imports from countries with weak labour and environmental protections. This advocate must be a champion for the working class in a global trade system designed to exploit us.

Nationalising strategic infrastructure

The goal of economic sovereignty cannot be achieved if the nation's most vital infrastructure remains subject to the profit demands of private capital. AMWU members call for the nationalising of strategic infrastructure. This is essential to the success of the *Future Made in Australia*

agenda, particularly in the energy and green manufacturing sectors.

- **Protect public investment:** If infrastructure is too important to fail or close down, it is too important to be in the hands of profit maximisers. Private ownership will always seek to demand taxpayer-funded bailouts or excessive subsidies.
- **Execute strategic goals:** Nationalisation of the energy transition, critical supply chains and key manufacturing platforms will immediately increase the government's power to achieve the strategic goals set out in the *FMIA Act*, ensuring investment is directed towards social good and national resilience, not private shareholder returns.

This action is essential to ensure that the *FMIA* is a structural success, not a corporate opportunity.



Restoring dignity to our trades

The skills and training blueprint

The protection of recognition for our trades and skills is paramount to the core of this nation's productive capacity. For more than two decades, our trades, skills and occupations have been continually undermined, undervalued and remain under threat. We will not allow a new generation to be saddled with debt and precarious work.

Our apprentices are the future of our working class, and we will not build a prosperous country on the foundation of their exploitation. We must reclaim the skills and training blueprint from the market and restore its rightful place as a public good. This is not just a skills shortage problem; it is a social justice failure.

Mandates for a sovereign skills system

Safeguarding the integrity and future of our trades and establishing skills recognition across all occupations requires bold, collective action and a commitment to immediate, meaningful reform.

These actions are needed to ensure skills and training are protected, and AMWU members will campaign to ensure that they are delivered:

1. End the wage injustice and secure fair pay

The AMWU will campaign for, and fight in the Fair Work Commission for:

- **Abolish junior rates and mandate a living wage:** Abolish junior rates and ensure all apprentices are paid a living wage — no less than the national minimum wage. Adult apprentice rates must be applied from the age of 18.
- **End debt-bondage:** Immediately abolish the Trade Support Loan system, which burdens young workers with debt. Mandate that all required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and tooling must be provided at the employer's expense.
- **Equal pay mandate:** Campaign for and enact the removal of apprentices from receiving equal pay for equivalent work ('Same Job, Same Pay').

2. Reclaim and modernise trade standards

We must come together and fight for:

- **Establish a National Accreditation Council:** Create a National Trades Training and Accreditation Council with union



representation to enforce robust, consistent minimum standards across apprentice supervision, mentoring, resource provision and training quality.

- **Modernise trade classifications:** Urgently resource a review and update of industrial Award classification and progression frameworks — like the MEM (metals and engineering skills) and AUR (automotive, retail and servicing skills) — to ensure they reflect modern industry skills.
- **Re-regulate VET and stop the free-market:** Re-regulate the Vocational Education and Training (VET) training space to stop the free-market approach. This includes adopting high international standards (e.g. the German Master Tradesperson) and opposing the rise of micro-credentials that undermine full trade qualifications.
- **Implement a skills levy:** Introduce a skills levy to adjust the incentive structure, making it unprofitable for firms to neglect workforce development and rewarding those who invest in quality, long-term training.

3. Democratise control and investment

Good governance in skills means democratisation and full public investment:

- **Guarantee fee-free public training:** Support and expand fee-free access to TAFE and vocational training for all trade apprentices.
- **Mandate union representation:** Mandate union representation on TAFE governance bodies to ensure democratic oversight and genuine industry input; reflecting the composition of students, apprentices and industry.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Ensure TAFEs are fully funded to provide fair and fee-free Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for displaced Australian workers.
- **Workplace ratios:** Develop and enforce mechanisms to include minimum apprentice-to-tradesperson ratios in all industrial instruments and contracts to guarantee quality hands-on training and mentorship where any public funds are supporting a project, industry or business.



Unleashing the full power of our workforce

A charter for workplace equity

FMIA is our movement's chance to reclaim Australia's productive capacity, reversing decades of neglect that have hollowed out our industries and left us weak against international capital. Labor's investment is merely the catalyst; the real power lies with us, the workers, and we will not waste it. The current skills crisis is not an accident — it is a deliberate, long-term failure by capital that defunded our trades, and treated skilled workers as a cost. We will solve this crisis by unleashing the full, collective power of all workers. Every barrier that limits the entry, growth, or retention of any worker — male or female, young or old — is a victory for the employer. Equity is not a burden; it is the foundation of our economic power.

All workers must have the opportunity and ability to share in the industrial expansion and transformation FMIA represents.

Investing in our most valuable asset: The worker

Workers are the true source of all value — the human skill and effort applied to production. Investing in our people is the single most critical investment in our nation's future. To strengthen our productive capacity and ensure the gains of FMIA benefit workers, we will organise and campaign for:

- **Mandated training investment via JSA:** Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) must be empowered through a training levy on industry to invest heavily in workers' skills. This national framework must guarantee paid time off for

training, union education, and ensuring training reflects the worker's needs, not the boss's profit margins.

- **The right to shape production:** Workers truly understand production efficiency. We need a legislative right for workers to fully participate in, and ultimately control, key workplace discussions on production planning, skills development, technology adoption, and work organisation. Union workshop committees must be empowered to shape these crucial decisions.

Breaking the barriers for women in trades

Manufacturing offers secure jobs, decent pay, and a union safety net — a clear path to dignity. Yet, structural barriers and cultural bias systematically deny women this wealth. This division weakens our industrial power. The underrepresentation of women is a critical national economic failure, requiring immediate, decisive intervention focused on both recruitment and long-term retention:

- **Mandate career equity from the start:** Schools must be mandated to provide both women and men with equitable access to information about trade pathways. Furthermore, all investment under FMIA must be conditional on clear targets for the recruitment and long-term retention of women. Public money must dismantle these historical barriers.



- **Fund mentorship and training by HER Education:** To close the support gap, dedicated funding must be provided to unions and employers to enable women tradespeople to dedicate paid time for promoting the trades, supervising, and mentoring female apprentices.
- **The right to a dignified and safe workplace:** A safe and inclusive workplace is a matter of respect. We demand legislation to mandate the provision of male, female, and unisex toilets, and change facilities in all workplaces. Crucially, to end the vilification and harassment that drives women out, the law must be reformed so that employers bear the full, undiluted financial burden of misconduct, ending the practice of discounting damages that currently subsidises sexual harassment.
- **Union-led cultural reform:** Dedicated government funding is necessary for trade unions to run mandatory education programs for all workers to eliminate bias and build the collective solidarity required to transform shop floor culture.
- **Dignity for our veterans (older workers):** Their decades of knowledge are a valuable industrial asset. Incentives for employers who retain and hire older workers, valuing their role as mentors, should be provided. Our demand to lower the retirement age for manual workers is a matter of honouring their contribution and empowering them to transition with dignity.
- **Investment in our future (young workers):** We will fight for the end of junior rates, in the FWC and demand the abolition of junior rates and the Trade Support Loan system. Every apprentice must be paid no less than the national minimum wage at every stage of their training. JSA must develop a national skills plan that provides pathways for young workers to gain essential skills in our key national industries.
- **The Awards and women workers:** The erosion of the Awards' safety net disproportionately affects women, contributing significantly to the gender pay gap. We will fight for awards to ensure a genuine living wage, determined by the cost of achieving social inclusion for workers, plus additional compensation for skill levels. Justice and dignity for all workers is not optional.

The intergenerational mandate and the Awards

We reject the divide-and-conquer tactics that pit the young against the old. Our unified strategy demands simultaneous investment in all generations to solve the skills crisis:

By breaking these barriers, we forge a stronger, more disciplined, and highly engaged working class, ready to claim the future we are building.

A just transition

Security for our communities

Climate change is real, and it is here.

Decisions made in overseas boardrooms are impacting our local industries and our economy. We will not be sacrificed in this shift. We demand a transition that is about people, not just technology – a transition where the path to a net zero future is paved with justice for the workers who have powered our homes and our economy for generations.

Manufacturing: the engine of a just future

Manufacturing is the essential pathway to a dignified, secure, and net zero future for Australia. The immense skills and experience held by workers in energy, resources and heavy industry are a national asset. We must harness this existing capability to secure the new economy.

This means actively facilitating the transfer of existing skills into new, high-quality, unionised manufacturing jobs. These aren't just replacement jobs; they are the foundation of a new era of secure, well-paid and dignified work building the infrastructure for a renewable nation — from batteries and solar components to green steel and hydrogen electrolyzers.

From closure dates to opening dates

We demand concrete certainty. AMWU members demand that the closure dates of fossil fuel facilities be linked to the guaranteed opening dates of new, unionised manufacturing plants in the same regions. This is a matter of justice and intergenerational equity. We will not accept communities being cast aside as the inevitable march of change moves forward. We will move as a class, together.

Empower the Net Zero Economy Authority

The Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEa) must serve as our collective tool to guide this transition, not as a bureaucratic observer. It must be a force for action, given the explicit powers and funding to seize opportunities. The job is to actively facilitate and direct investment to create high-quality, unionised jobs. We will not allow the future of our regions to be dictated by distant boardrooms; it must be shaped by those who live and work there. The NZEA must ensure that workers are the first to benefit from the new industries they are building.

Securing the right to a home

A working-class solution to a working-class problem

The 'Great Australian Dream' has become a working-class nightmare. We demand a future where housing is a right, not a commodity. This isn't a battle between generations; it's a class war.

The housing market is rigged against us, a casino where landlords, developers and wealthy investors gamble with our lives. The solution cannot be left to the same people who created this mess.

Revolutionise how we build homes

The housing industry must be revolutionised by manufacturing homes in factories. This gives us control; creates better, unionised jobs; and delivers truly affordable, high-quality homes. It moves work from dangerous construction sites into safe, controlled factory environments; valuing our lives more than corporate timelines.

Modular construction of homes provides many benefits including:

- 1. Union power and better jobs:** This creates a new sector of skilled, permanent, unionised factory jobs. We can organise these sites overnight, bringing thousands of workers under the banner of a strong, unified union and providing apprenticeships with decent pay and strong benefits.
- 2. Affordability and quality:** We dramatically lower the cost of production, passing savings directly to working families. We build better, stronger and safer homes in a controlled environment; ensuring strict, high-quality standards.
- 3. Safety and control:** Work is moved off dangerous, scattered construction sites into safe, organised factory environments; drastically reducing injuries and long-term health problems.
- 4. Sovereign supply:** We strengthen local industries and supply chains, keeping jobs and money within our communities.

The three channels to a fairer future

New homes must be prioritised for working people and distributed through three essential channels: buy to live, rent to buy and public housing.

- 1. Buy to live:** This channel allows workers and their families to achieve the dream of owning and living in their own homes.
- 2. Rent to buy:** This program creates a pathway from renting to ownership, allowing workers to put a portion of their rent toward a down payment.
- 3. Public housing:** This channel ensures low-paid workers, those in poverty, and retired workers can live with dignity and security.

Dismantle the rigged system

We must dismantle the unfair tax system that favours wealthy investors. We demand the abolition of negative gearing, and the removal of the capital gains discount on investment properties, grandfathered in over a two-year period.

These policies will help to fundamentally reshape the housing model to make housing a right, not a profit vehicle. This is a strategic step to dismantle a system built to exploit us.



Our industrial rights

Our call for industrial justice

Employers have long used the law to shackle our collective power. It is time to correct the historical injustices of industrial relations and restore the fundamental, non-negotiable rights of the working class to organise, bargain and strike without fear of legal reprisal.

These rights are not privileges to be granted, but entitlements grounded in the principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Without them, workers are powerless and susceptible to exploitation.

Mandates for industrial democracy

We call for immediate legislative action to restore the basic architecture of worker power:

1. The core rights of association and organisation

- **Right to join and organise:** Every worker has the inalienable right to join and freely organise a union in their workplace and industry without fear of intimidation, discrimination or reprisal. This right is the first step toward collective power.
- **Union right of entry:** The legal shackles that limite union access must be broken. Unions must have the right to enter a workplace at any time when work is being performed to organise, defend members and build power.

2. The right to strike is non-negotiable

- **Abolish restrictions on strike action:** The so-called ‘protected action’ system is a labyrinth of red tape designed to restrict and crush our ability to fight. All restrictions on our right to strike, including secret ballot and ministerial intervention, must be removed. A true right to strike is our most powerful weapon, and we will campaign for the removal of all legislation that restricts our ability to defend ourselves from the greed and violence of private capital.
- **End the lockout:** The lockout is a brutal weapon of capital, used to starve us into submission. The law must be amended to remove or restrict lockouts so they can only be used in direct response to a work stoppage and for no longer than than stoppage. The use of strike breakers must be outlawed.

3. Fairer bargaining and collective advantage

- **Unions are central to fair bargaining:** The *Fair Work Act* must be amended to ensure that only unions and employers can be bargaining representatives.
- **Every worker contributes:** We call for an end to the economic hypocrisy of free-riding by providing the right to charge a bargaining service fee for non-members, ensuring every worker who benefits from collectively



bargained gains contributes fairly to the costs incurred to achieve them.

- **Enforcing industrial rights:** The system for dispute arbitration needs to be reformed to allow any party to request arbitration without needing the consent of the other side. Employers must not have a veto on justice.
- **Sectoral bargaining:** Enterprise bargaining fragments the collective strength of workers and enables large employers to suppress wages and conditions. Sectoral bargaining restores industry-wide unity and fairness — but to be effective, unions must have the capacity to bring employers to the table and to become party to the agreement, as under the former award system.

4. Empowering the next generation of leaders

- **Right to education:** Workers must have access to comprehensive education and training on their rights and responsibilities. This includes the right to paid time off for union training and delegate development.
- **Right to participate:** Workers and their unions must be guaranteed a seat at the table in all decisions that affect their livelihoods and industries. Their direct and meaningful participation is critical for effective, equitable and sustainable policy.

AMWU members will campaign for an industrial system that actively facilitates and rewards the exercise of collective power, ensuring that the working class is both the engine and the beneficiary of national progress.

A young man with short dark hair, smiling, wearing a light-colored work shirt with a 'MACK' logo on the pocket. He is in a workshop or factory setting with various equipment and machinery visible in the background.

Working to live, not living to work

A moral imperative for modern Australia

For generations, the fight for a better life has been a union fight — a relentless battle to reclaim our time and dignity from a system that treats us as mere cogs in a machine. This is not a new struggle. From the fight for the 8-hour day led by working-class heroes, to our forebears in the AEU and AMWSU who won the 44-hour week and pushed for the 35-hour week; our history proves that we are not machines, we are human beings.

We are not a resource to be expended. We are the source of all value, and we deserve to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

A shorter work week: a right earned, not a luxury

Employers will always tell us that a shorter work week is a threat to productivity and an economic impossibility. This is a recycled excuse from the same people who have profited from our labour for generations. The truth is, productivity is created by workers, and a well-rested worker is a more productive worker. When we have time to recharge, to be with our families, and to live our lives, we show up to work healthier, happier and more focused.

The data confirms this truth: while our productivity has skyrocketed, our wages have remained stagnant. This isn't coincidence; it's robbery. Since the 1980s, the bosses have been pocketing the profits we've created, leaving us with longer hours and bigger mortgages.

A shorter work week is the only way to claw back what is rightfully ours. It is our demand for more than just a wage — it is a demand for a life. We will no longer accept exploitation as the cost of doing business.

A blueprint for implementation

Achieving a shorter work week requires a strategic, three-pronged approach where governments, businesses and workers each play a crucial role. This is not a handout; it is a working-class solution to a working-class problem.

1. The leadership of government

The government's role is to create the legal and economic framework that makes a shorter work week possible.

- **Legislate the right to disconnect:** Explicitly legislating the right for workers to disconnect from work outside of their ordinary hours is the crucial first step in redefining the boundaries between work and life.
- **Incentivise change:** Government must use its procurement power and tax policy to incentivise businesses that implement a shorter work week without a reduction in pay. This would include preferential treatment for government contracts and tax benefits for companies that can demonstrate an increase in productivity.



- **Trial and report:** Government must fund and oversee large-scale trials of a shorter work week across different industries, with a mandate to report on productivity, worker wellbeing and economic impact. This will provide undeniable evidence of the benefits of a shorter work week.

2. The responsibility of business

Businesses are expected to be partners in this transition, not adversaries. Their role is to innovate and adapt their business models to reflect a modern economy.

- **Invest in productivity:** Instead of squeezing more hours out of workers, businesses must invest in the real drivers of productivity: new technology, better machinery, research and development, the adoption of new products, and improved management practices.
- **Lead with respect:** Business leaders must acknowledge that their greatest asset is their people, not their profit margins. This means looking at workers as human beings, not resources. They must engage in genuine consultation with unions and workers to co-design the implementation of a shorter work week in a way that benefits everyone.

- **Accept the new standard:** The shorter work week is the next frontier of industrial relations. Businesses that resist will be left behind. Those that embrace, it will build a more resilient, motivated and productive workforce.

3. The opportunity for workers

Workers are the agents of change. The shorter work week will not be granted; it must continue to be won through organised action.

- **Organise and bargain:** Workers must continue to join their union and use their collective power to demand a shorter work week as a key claim in enterprise bargaining agreements. This is where the fight is won on the ground, workplace by workplace.
- **Participate in the transition:** Workers must actively participate in the trials and the design of the new work models. They have the on-the-ground knowledge to identify inefficiencies, propose solutions that will boost productivity and make the transition a success.
- **Hold the line:** Workers must stand strong and refuse to accept any trade-offs that would erode their wages, conditions, or hard-won rights. The goal is not just a shorter week, but a better life, and we should not sacrifice one for the other.



Knowledge is power

Our blueprint for a worker-led future

The current model of industrial control is a flawed relic from a previous economic era. Employers have long maintained a monopoly on knowledge and ideas, treating the workplace as a black box where only they hold the keys to strategy, planning, and so-called ‘innovation.’ They demand workers leave our brains at the door, as if the person who sweats over the machine has nothing to teach the person who signs the pay cheques.

This imbalance of power and information actively undermines national productivity and innovation. We, the workers, are the ones who truly understand the rhythms of production and the science of our craft. We reject this destructive model. It’s time for a transfer of power; recognising that a unionised, educated and skilled workforce is the greatest asset for national progress, and the greatest remedy for antiquated systems built on raw commodity extraction.

Building collaborative workplaces: the redefinition of control

A collaborative workplace is not a corporate euphemism for control; it is a revolutionary space where the collective intellect of the working class is unleashed. We insist that the government encourage and support structures that redefine control in our industries.

The establishment and support of workshop committees, run by and for the workers, with the power to:

- **Establish workshop committees:** These committees should be empowered to make recommendations about production planning, resource utilisation and quality control. We know the most efficient way to get the job done, and we will no longer accept being treated as mindless appendages to the machines we operate.
- **Identify and solve problems:** Workers are best placed to identify and solve workplace issues. From safety hazards to inefficiencies, workers must be given the tools to use our on-the-ground knowledge to improve our conditions and our output.
- **Share knowledge and skills:** These committees can best plan for knowledge transfer by breaking down the artificial hierarchies that management uses to divide us by empowering every worker to develop their skills collectively.

Trade union education: the foundation of worker justice

Education for the working class should not be limited to technical skills; it is a vital tool in the pursuit of justice and equity. For too long,



opportunities have been controlled and limited by dominant forces, often used to instil obedience, conformity, and shackles by high costs and crippling student debt. We insist on a new model of education, one that fosters collective consciousness and solidarity.

- **Skills for collective power:** Government must invest in and develop robust worker education programs. This includes not just technical and trade skills, but also the essential skills of organising, bargaining and leadership. An educated worker is an empowered worker.
- **Reestablish the Australian Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA):** TUTA must be reestablished urgently, including a brick-and-mortar national training college, with funding from government. This authority will ensure the effective delivery of education that teaches the history of our struggle — the strikes, the victories and the defeats. Our education should be a constant reminder that every gain was fought for, and every future gain must be secured with equal resolve.
- **Beyond the workplace:** Our education must extend beyond the factory gates. It must equip workers with the tools to understand the economic systems that exploit them, to see the connections between their workplace and society at large, and to prepare for the fight to build a more just world.

- **The struggle for a just society:** Our education must actively confront the forces that divide us. Government must commit to investment in programs designed to educate workers against racism, inequality and the systematic undermining of democracy. Unity is our greatest strength, and we must equip workers to fight prejudice and authoritarianism wherever they arise.
- **Art for workers:** Creative expression and cultural participation is not a luxury but a right — essential for human dignity, meaning-making, connection and enrichment beyond the demands of labour. It's time to bring back Art & Working Life, a joint funding initiative with government, to promote cultural activity by artists, arts workers and unions in and out of the workplace.

By investing in trade union education, government is not just training individuals; it is building a powerful collective consciousness. It is ensuring an informed, disciplined and unified workforce, ready to secure the victories of today and tomorrow.



Dignity in life and retirement

The blueprint for social security and justice

The struggle for dignity does not end at the factory gate. The failures of a profit-driven system follow the worker home and into their retirement. We call on government to use its power to fix a system that has failed our most vulnerable.

Mandates for a fairer social fabric

We demand immediate action on the following fronts is required to ensure social security is a right, not a precarious privilege:

- **Nationalise aged care:** We have spent our lives building this country, and we demand dignity in our old age. The privatised aged care sector is a disgrace, a system that puts profits over people. Aged care must be returned to public ownership, ensuring it is a service for the people, not a commodity for the market.
- **Abolish pensioner poverty:** We will not accept that our retired comrades live in poverty. The retired pension must be lifted by \$20 a day to lift pensioners out of poverty. Furthermore, government must immediately fix the formula that sets the minimum total pension, ensuring it keeps pace with the true cost-of-living.
- **Raise the rate:** Australia's social safety net fails to allow people to afford a roof over their heads and food on the table. It must provide them with the resources required to engage with their communities, and to thrive, not just survive. Workers contribute to our social safety net and deserve access when needed. Low welfare payments must be raised, as these payments currently function as a tool of worker control, keeping people in precarity by threatening them with undignified conditions.
- **Justice for injured workers:** The long waiting periods for WorkCover claims are a cruelty, a system designed to starve injured workers into submission. Legislative reform is needed to ensure that the waiting period is fairly funded, with the financial burden falling on the employer and insurer, not on the injured worker.
- **End discrimination:** The current laws fail to protect older workers and those with chronic conditions from discrimination. The *Disability Discrimination Act* must be reformed:
 - Expanding the definition of 'disability'
 - Giving the Human Rights Commission power to arbitrate disputes
 - Ending the 'unjustifiable hardship' exemption that bosses use to avoid making reasonable accommodations



- **End sub-minimum wages for workers with disability:** A just industrial relations system recognises all workers as human beings deserving of dignity and protection, not a commodity to be exploited for profit.

Our current industrial relations system fails this fundamental principle by sanctioning the exploitation of people with disability. Workers with disabilities are able to be paid significantly less than the minimum wage under the guise of 'reduced productivity'. This is an affront to our national values and a profound betrayal of human equality. This injustice must end.

We call for legislation to end supported wage rates. People with disability, like all workers, deserve a living wage and must not be treated as less than other workers through legal mechanisms that allow sub-minimum pay.

- **The right to cash:** The push for a cashless society is a new form of exclusion, designed to leave behind our most vulnerable. We demand that the government mandate that businesses, especially those that sell essential items, accept cash payments. We will not allow the market to decide who can participate in the economy.

These actions are necessary to ensure that the wealth created by the working class translates into security and dignity for every citizen, at every stage of life.

Technology in service of the people

Automation for shared social good

The AMWU asserts that the full power and long-term limits of technology are unknown, making the risks of unrestricted Artificial Intelligence (AI) immeasurable. We recognise that the relentless march of capital and its technology threatens to leave us behind.

AMWU members demand a world where technology serves the worker, not the boss.

We must never forget: it is healthier, better-educated workers who make technology work for us, not the other way around. It is workers, not machines, who create real value.

The mandate for AI is clear: it must be focused on eliminating the tasks that detract from human dignity and enjoyment, and must never consume the parts of work where workers extract joy, reward and better pay. The benefit of automation must be a shared social good, not a private corporate windfall.

Mandates for a worker-centred digital future

Technology must be an instrument of social good, not a new tool for exploitation:

- **Regulate AI for workers:** The unchecked adoption of AI in the workplace is a direct threat to our privacy, our jobs and our rights. Government must deliver national regulations that protect us from the misuse of AI in management decisions.
- **Accountability:** If a computer cannot be held accountable, then it should not be allowed to make decisions that affect our lives.
- **Data control:** The data being collected on our work is not a tool for management; it is a tool for control, and we will not accept it.

- **Consultation mandate:** Any implementation of AI in the workplace must require negotiation and worker approval.
- **Bargaining for automation:** When employers use automation to increase their profits, we demand that remaining workers have the legal right to bargain for a fair share of that wealth. We will not allow new technology to simply be a new tool for our exploitation. The wealth we create with these machines belongs to us.
- **Establish manufacturing hubs:** To ensure this future is locally owned, government must establish manufacturing hubs in key strategic locations across the country. This is about building a new ecosystem of innovation, supply chains and training that is owned and operated for the benefit of our communities. We call for federal funding for a Manufacturing Hub Grant Program to make this a reality.

Technology must enhance, not diminish, the human value of work, and contribute to shared national prosperity.

Stopping the erosion of dignity

Collective power and resilience

Our fight for the dignity of vulnerable workers is an ongoing one. Government must do its part to level the playing field, but it is our internal strength that will secure our victories.

Reclaiming our bargaining power

Legislative reforms are needed to restrict the use of labour hire and contractors for regular, ongoing work that is already covered by a union-negotiated enterprise agreement. The labour hire rort must end, ensuring job security for our members, including the most vulnerable and exploited workers who are trapped in precarious arrangements.

Reducing the retirement age

For manual workers who have spent a lifetime of hard labour, the current retirement age is a cruel and unjust burden. The retirement age should be no higher than 65, and the right to access the pension at 60 should be extended to manual workers. The physical toll on our bodies should be honoured with the same dignity afforded to others.

Modernising our awards

The modern award system has become a hollowed-out shell that no longer provides a safety net for the most vulnerable. We need government support to strengthen and modernise our awards. This ensures they become living documents that reflect the true value of our work, affirm that workers are not commodities to be traded on the open market and provide for proper entitlements, including those for union delegates.

All awards should guarantee a living wage as a foundation, with additional compensation reflecting workers' skills and experience. Workers are not commodities, and their fundamental conditions should not be left to the whims of the market. Every worker deserves the dignity and security that comes from earning a wage sufficient for a decent and fulfilling life including fair compensation for the skills they have developed. Additionally, they should reflect the prevailing conditions within industry, not the lowest possible aspirations for a society.

Building a fair society

Fairness in the home and across the globe

The struggle for justice knows no borders. Our fight is linked to the fight of workers everywhere.

A campaign for fair trade and tariffs

We have long opposed 'free' trade agreements that are anything but free for the working class. Blanket, flat tariffs are a tax on working people. Instead, we support and advocate for targeted tariffs that foster and protect new industries, a tool used by every successful industrial nation to build its own economic sovereignty.

Additionally, trade should be a tool by which we lift up our brothers and sisters in less wealthy nations, not one by which to entrench their exploitation for the benefit of a few. We demand that all trade agreements require disclosure of the wages and conditions of workers in the firms in the nations with which we trade. If such conditions do not reflect a living wage, fair compensation for skills, and a safe working environment in which all workers have a voice, that company should be banned from exporting to Australia and the importer should face heavy financial penalties. A failure to engage in such action represents an implicit acceptance and endorsement of exploitation.

Solidarity with Palestine

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza represents a catastrophic moral and political failure demanding urgent action. Our solidarity is with all oppressed peoples.

Government must use its full diplomatic and legal power to meet the requirements of international justice:

- **Secure ceasefire and hostage release:** All diplomatic pressure must be applied to secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the release of all hostages.
- **End military trade:** We call for the immediate end of all military trade with Israel.
- **Recognise Palestine:** Labor must formally recognise the state of Palestine.

Australia must actively uphold its commitment to international law and the fundamental rights of all peoples.

A workers' vision for food security

The predatory practices of major supermarkets are a direct attack on Australian food producers and on our national food security. Supermarkets that prioritise imported goods for home brands should be subject to financial penalties. Furthermore, "Australian Made" sections should be mandated in all supermarkets, not as a gimmick, but as a matter of economic and social resilience. We will not allow our nation's ability to feed itself to be dictated by the profit margins of a few corporations.

Leave and the NES

It is time to legislate to improve the National Employment Standards (NES). We want 15 days of personal leave, a defined 'day' that matches our rostered shift hours, and an end to the ridiculous requirement for medical certificates for single-day absences. We also demand new, separate entitlements for paid reproductive leave and paid leave for natural disasters.

A trade union blueprint for equity in education

Pathway to justice

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

— Nelson Mandela

The fight for universal access to quality education is an expression of our belief in the inherent value and potential of all human beings. Education is a basic human right, and its provision must never be an opportunity determined by income or restricted by fees.

We have long championed education’s status as the most effective tool by which to alleviate poverty and empower working people. Our historical struggle, which culminated in landmark achievements like the expansion of primary schooling and the provision of universal and free tertiary education under the Whitlam Government, demonstrates this commitment.

Mandates for a fair educational system

Today, these hard-won gains are under systematic attack. We face a society where education is increasingly stratified; entrenching a class of privilege and condemning future generations of working people to fewer opportunities. We call for the following actions to ensure justice in education:

- **Eliminate class inequality in schooling:**
The quality of primary and secondary education is often determined by their parents’ financial status. This injustice is rooted in the chronic underfunding of public schools compared to private institutions.

Government must end this two-tiered system and implement transparent, legislated funding models that guarantee every public school

receives the resources necessary to provide world-class education, regardless of postcode.

- **Guarantee free tertiary education:**
Access to university and VET has become a primary barrier for working-class backgrounds, shackled by high costs and crippling student debt.

Government must restore the principle of universal access, immediately committing to free tertiary education at the point of access.

HECS/HELP debts must be abolished and the student support system reformed. Programs like Austudy and Youth Allowance must be increased to a living standard, acknowledging the true cost-of-living and ensuring students can study without being forced into debilitating precarity.

These disparities are systemic injustices that must be addressed. By removing all financial barriers, education can again be a pathway to escape poverty, not a debt sentence determined by the wealth of one’s parents.

Solidarity with First Nation peoples

A pathway to sovereignty and justice

The foundation of this country rests upon a massive, ongoing injustice: the theft of this land, the violence, bloodshed and brutal mass dispossession of our First Nations people.

While the working class did not commit these colonial crimes, we inherit the system that came from them — a system that favours the rich and powerful — and thus we inherit the obligation to fix its biggest wrong.

This is not a divide; it is a shared fight for fairness, equality and working-class solidarity. The systemic oppression and the trauma of theft still hit First Nations communities hard today, resulting in unequal pay, terrible health outcomes and disproportionate incarceration.

To build the decent Australia we deserve, Governments must act decisively to settle the debt of the past and secure a united future.

The four-step pathway to justice

- 1. Own the debt and the truth:** We must universally acknowledge the historical reality: this land was stolen through violence and dispossession. This is not about blame; it is about truth. Government must commit to acknowledging the ongoing pain and systemic disadvantage suffered by our First Nations comrades as a direct result of these colonial crimes.
- 2. Enact the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full:** This is the practical path forward, guided by First Nations people themselves. Government must implement the First Nations Voice to Parliament, followed by Treaty and Truth-Telling.

This gives the people who have suffered most the power and the platform to shape their own destiny and fix their communities — it is the definition of self-determination and true solidarity.

- 3. Abolish the symbols of oppression:** We need to strip away the constant reminders of the old ruling class and colonial empire. Symbols of oppression — like the Union Jack on our flag and offensive colonial statues — must be removed from public life. A fair country should not celebrate the very symbols used to commit violence and dispossession against its First Peoples.
- 4. Invest in repair, not prisons:** True justice means shifting resources. Government must commit to solid, long-term public investment — funded by fairly taxing the rich and the corporations — into First Nations health, education, housing and community control initiatives — specifically targeting the intergenerational trauma zones. We must stop locking up our Indigenous brothers and sisters at record rates and instead invest in fixing the root causes of disadvantage.

The fight for justice for First Nations people is central to the broader fight for a truly equal, fair and decent Australia for all working people. We all must follow this pathway to finally square up with the past and build a united future.

Fair return

Reclaiming our natural resources and minerals

Australia's natural resources and minerals are the nation's sovereign birthright. The obscene profits derived from these resources must be secured and reinvested to fund the economic diversification required for the 21st century.

For too long, Australia has been treated as little more than a quarry — a source of wealth for international shareholders — where multinational corporations can extract our wealth for obscene profits and send them offshore.

History proves that private capital will not invest at the rate or scale required for our national transition; consequently, government must secure the revenue to facilitate this necessary public investment.

Mandates for revenue generation

We find it unacceptable that, despite ripping up our national birthright, these corporations pay a lower effective tax rate than the average Australian nurse. This is structural theft.

AMWU members call for a fair share of our resources by immediate legislation to deliver:

- **Comprehensive resource royalty reform:** The Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (PRRT) requires fundamental reform; and loopholes on royalties on all natural minerals must be eliminated. The tax and royalty system must be a primary mechanism for maximising the public return on all resource extraction.
- **Redirection of the Fuel Tax Credit (FTC) system:** The FTC system functions as a massive, unjustified corporate subsidy to large, highly profitable resource companies and must be redirected to subsidise the transport of essential goods and services like foods such as fruits and vegetables, thereby lowering prices for working people.

These actions would immediately secure tens of billions of dollars that rightly belong to the Australian people. This revenue must be aggressively invested in manufacturing, education and energy transition to ensure long-term national prosperity and self-reliance.

Health as a human right

Our principles and policy for human dignity

To take actions that deny a person the right to the health they deserve is to deny their humanity.

This principle of health equity is at the heart of every policy we advocate. The labour movement's core motivation is ethical obligation and the pursuit of human dignity. There is no responsible way to develop policy without considering its impact on the health of all Australians.

Restore free healthcare access

First and foremost, we call on government to honour the founding principle of Medicare by restoring a system in which care is truly free at the point of access.

Without such measures, we accept a system where access depends on one's ability to pay rather than on need. This financial barrier to primary care forces delayed diagnosis and intervention, leading to higher costs, greater suffering and preventable death.

All out-of-pocket costs for essential general and specialist healthcare services must be eliminated, ensuring the health of a worker is never dependent on their bank balance.

The social determinants of health

Health is determined by far more than access to healthcare; it is a direct function of a person's life conditions. Every policy decision has consequences for the health of Australians, determining whether a person lives a full life or faces premature ill-health or death.

Governments must recognise and act on the following social determinants of health:

- **Economic inequality:** Tax policy that fails to address inequality implicitly accepts premature death for many. Poverty is a significant determinant of health and wellbeing.
- **Housing security:** Lack of access to secure, affordable housing implicitly accepts premature death for many. Stable shelter is the single most critical factor in preventative health.
- **Dignified work:** Employment that does not provide a living wage, security and safe working conditions implicitly accepts premature death for many. Precarious, exploited labour is a public health hazard.

Mandate health impact assessment

Because a person's health is a fundamental measure of their wellness and capacity, governments must require that every new policy proposal undergo a rigorous Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

This assessment must consider the consequences of all policies — including those related to tax, housing, employment and environment — on the physical and mental health of Australians, ensuring that every government decision actively works to reduce inequality and secure universal wellbeing.

Financing a future we all share

A fairer tax system

The principle of shared prosperity

A fair society is one where our collective contribution is organised according to each citizen's capacity to contribute, ensuring that all can access a high standard of living, regardless of their employment status or wealth.

Taxation is not a burden; it is the fundamental contribution to essential public services that create a well-functioning, healthy and secure society. It is the primary tool for achieving economic justice, reversing wealth inequality and financing the services required for universal well-being and a dignified life for all.

1. Ensuring the wealthy pay their fair share

The current tax system is rigged to favour private wealth accumulation and speculation over productive labour and social good. The tax system must be restructured to ensure the wealthiest corporations and individuals pay their fair share by eliminating loopholes and tax shelters.

This can be achieved by:

- **Progressive tax reform:** Introducing a higher top marginal tax rate for incomes over a specified threshold (e.g., above \$500,000) and strengthening the progressive structure of the entire income tax system.
- **Comprehensive wealth and inheritance tax:** Implementing a progressive annual wealth tax on net assets above a high threshold (excluding the primary residence up to a set value) and a significant inheritance tax on large bequests to prevent the intergenerational concentration of wealth.

- **Corporate tax integrity:** Closing loopholes exploited by multinational corporations, strengthening transfer pricing rules and ensuring corporations pay tax on profits made domestically. Labor must explore a public disclosure requirement for large companies' financial data.

2. Universal, free, and essential services

The services essential for life, health and social advancement must be universal and free at the point of use, financed entirely through general taxation. Eliminating fees and debt associated with these services liberates working families and stimulates the economy by increasing disposable income.

We call on government to finance the following essential services publicly, fully and free for all citizens:

- **Healthcare and dental:** Labor must mandate the full integration and funding of all general and specialist healthcare services, including dental, mental health, and pharmaceutical needs, into a single, comprehensive national service.
- **Education:** Labor must ensure all levels of education are free, from early childhood education and kindergarten through to university and TAFE/vocational training, thereby eliminating student debt and ensuring education is a right, not a privilege.

3. Dignity in social security and retirement

Social security and the aged pension are fundamental expressions of a society's commitment to its most vulnerable and its past contributors. The system must operate as a genuine safety net and a recognition of service, not a means of poverty enforcement.

- **Re-establish the CES:** Government must re-establish and strengthen the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) as a public sector, not-for-profit agency dedicated solely to the worker. Unlike profit-driven private placement schemes, the CES must focus on providing comprehensive support — including high-quality career counselling, skills assessment and access to public vocational training — to ensure every worker finds a path to dignified employment or relevant retraining as soon as practicable.
- **Abolish poverty:** All social security payments and services must be elevated to a level definitively above the poverty line as defined by an objective national standard, ensuring a life of dignity for all recipients.
- **Dignified retirement:** The single age pension base level must be set at a minimum of 35% of Male Full Time Adult Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings (MFAWOTE) to guarantee a financially secure and dignified retirement for all, regardless of their lifetime savings or investments.

4. A public service for public provision

Delivering on the values of equity and fairness requires a strong, well-funded and democratically accountable public service capable of efficiently planning, delivering and maintaining essential services.

The public service must be expanded to include the direct provision of essential services and to act as the ultimate guarantor of economic security.

Mandates for public sector expansion include:

- **Public sector job guarantee:** A guarantee to all citizens ready, willing, and able to work that will be provided with a meaningful job within the public sector, ending the tragedy of involuntary unemployment.

- **Direct service provision:** An expanded role for the public service to include the direct delivery of essential services and public job creation programs in situations where the market does not achieve full employment, generate sufficient social benefit, or where profit-driven models compromise access, quality, or equity.

5. Designing socially productive jobs

Public service jobs must be explicitly designed to generate social and environmental value through large-scale, nationwide projects, including but not limited to:

- **Environmental work:** Large-scale land care, biodiversity restoration and the creation of energy transition projects and green infrastructure.
- **Care economy:** Expansion of elder care, disability support and early childhood education support roles to meet universal demand and ensure high-quality care is a right.
- **Community revitalisation:** Maintenance and upgrade of public housing and community infrastructure, cultural preservation and neighbourhood-level support services.
- **Essential infrastructure:** The provision of high-speed, publicly-owned broadband and other critical utilities.
- **Public banking:** The establishment of a state-owned bank to provide basic, low-fee financial services and to finance critical public infrastructure projects.
- **Public housing manufacturing:** As detailed in our housing chapter.

This expansion ensures that public expenditure directly translates into dignified, productive employment while simultaneously building the assets and services required for a shared, equitable future.



This blueprint has been prepared by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.
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