

fsu@work

.anz member magazine

**SIGN UP AND
GO PLACES**

See page 8



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July 2002

Joy wins legal
battle.

Can ANZ Restore
Staff Faith?





Statement with Tony Beck

ANZ risks falling behind

ANZ could be a great bank. It has great staff, increasingly popular products and a renewed commitment to the community.

But ANZ won't reach its full potential unless it

dramatically improves industrial and employee relations.

ANZ has been found wanting in five significant legal cases this year - each a major embarrassment to the bank.

At a recent meeting with the ANZ, the union said staffing and targets were critical issues for FSU members.

Its now up to ANZ to be positive and support staff through fair enterprise conditions - only then can ANZ reach its full potential.

Less than 50 cents extra

Union dues will rise from 1 July, with full-time members being asked to pay an extra 48 cents per fortnight. We are aware that every cent counts in household budgets, and assure you that the increase is absolutely necessary to keep working effectively.

Strategies for Strength is the theme of the forthcoming FSU Biennial Conference. It is about making the union more relevant and stronger in your workplace. Conference will also be deciding on ways to involve you more in shaping the direction of the union (see page 7).

The best way to make the union stronger is to attract more members. Between now and 30 September 2002, every new member, and the member who nominates them, will get a free cinema pass plus the chance to win a fabulous Fiji holiday package - (see page 8).

Finally, welcome to the new look FSU@Work magazine. It will be published in July and November of each year, joining our Annual Report and faxed Updates in our program of member communications.

Tony Beck
FSU National Secretary

Express lane



RELIEF WANTED!

ANZ staff at Warwick Grove shopping centre in WA wouldn't want to be in a hurry for the loo, as there isn't one nearby.

Reaching the nearest toilet involves leaving the branch, travelling through the shopping centre, down past a food hall and along a long hallway - not ideal if you're in a hurry or are forced to leave a long queue of customers! Not to mention the effect it has on targets and of course the stress on members.

FSU took a video of one of our members re-enacting her trip to the toilet (not the actual visit!) and presented it to Worksafe WA, who took one look at it and agreed to send inspectors to visit the branch to ensure they comply with the work safety laws!

COMMERCIAL TELLERS TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Being a Commercial Teller can be a nightmare according to an FSU survey. Topping the list of concerns was accessing cash while keeping it safely secured. Problem times are breaks or when busy periods when others need to share cash.

One respondent wrote, 'it's OK as long as you are left alone to do the job without interruptions. Extra duties should be kept to a minimum and shared between other staff.'

The survey also highlighted the limited opportunity for sales. Respondents talked about the constant pressure to sell, which can be difficult because Commercial Tellers often service the same customers on a regular basis.

Also the participants commented about the overflowing workload which leaves no time to sell products.

TIM TAMS ALL ROUND



ANZ Whitfords Branch is celebrating 100% union membership with Tim Tams and morning tea.

FSU member Lorna Brown told FSU@Work that receiving a 100% membership certificate was great.

'At Whitfords ANZ we are all friends and look after each other in many ways, it seems so natural to be in the Union. The morning tea and the Tim Tams went down a treat when we got our certificate. We have put it up on our notice board. We are also proud that the Whitfords Branch is staffed by all women,' she said.

WIN FOR SINGLE MUM

Getting extra part-time hours can help make the family budget - especially when your raising a family on a single income.

But getting extra hours is sometimes easier said than done. An ANZ member working as a permanent part-timer (29 hours per week) has scored extra hours ahead of agency staff by standing up for her rights.

The member advised her branch manager that she wanted additional hours at her parent branch as well as at any neighboring branches. Ignoring her request, the branch (and other close-by branches) continued to make use of employment agency staff when they needed extra hours worked.

The member contacted the Union for assistance and found that the ANZ/FSU Agreement supported her case. The agreement says that existing part-time staff will be given the opportunity to access additional hours prior to the employment of any additional staff.

The member is now offered additional hours before the employment agency is contacted.

ANZ UNDER FIRE FROM THE COURTS

The ANZ has been slammed by judges and coroners in five major decisions already this year.

Most recently Federal Court Judge Wilcox found that the ANZ acted unlawfully when it threatened FSU President (and ANZ Branch Manager) with the sack for commenting on working conditions.

Days earlier, a New Zealand Coroner recommended that the ANZ change its performance management system after a manager committed suicide. The Coroner was highly critical of the publication of managers' results and found the way targets were monitored added significantly to staff anxiety.

Commission protects severance

Earlier in May, the Industrial Relation Commission protected the severance entitlements of ANZ affected by the establishment of the ANZ / ING joint venture.

The decision was a major win for the FSU members affected, giving staff a genuine choice in their future employment by removing the threat of lost severance pay.

In February the IRC rejected an ANZ claim that not meeting sales targets was grounds for dismissal. Ruling on the case of a Business Development Manager, the FSU showed that the targets were unrealistic and therefore the dismissal was unfair, unreasonable and unjust.

The Commission found that the ANZ performance management process was inflexible and unfair because it did not offer any opportunity to vary the targets to suit the circumstances.

Also in February, the ANZ backed down from a five year bitter legal battle about the calculation of TEC managers long service payments - giving many managers long awaited back payments!

If this was the World Cup, the score would be: FSU members 5 / ANZ 0!

Photo: Kyla-Jane Hunt



Sheryl Bear, Sharon Yates, Irene Tjorpatzis and Joe Williamson from Reservoir Branch are just four of 4,000 members who signed the petition telling ANZ they want a fair agreement.

4,000 SIGNATURES IN PETITION SUCCESS

If all the FSU Petitions were lined up end to end, they would stretch for nearly 1.5 kilometers!

Petitions were received from over 1,000 workplaces across the nation.

Tony Beck, FSU National Secretary, said the volume of signatures sent a very clear message to the ANZ.

'ANZ employees want more than pay rises - they want action on workloads, targets and job security.

'The new agreements in Westpac and National banks deliver improved pay, workloads and security'. Mr Beck said the union had asked the ANZ to recommence negotiations.

ACT OF GOD, DISASTER OR BOTH?

A Victorian Tribunal has ruled that bank closures should be classified in the disaster category alongside floods, fires and earthquakes.

This follows an appeal by a disgruntled CBA customer about the closure of his local branch. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal told the customer the closure was an 'act of God' and unavoidable.

The tribunal was satisfied that bank closures could be grouped in the disaster category.

Disaster yes! But we are not sure that the big four bosses - Ciccuto, McFarlane, Morgan and Murray - rate as gods!

Features of Westpac and National agreements		
	Westpac	National
Job security	✓	RRR agreement certified
Workloads	✓	✓
Targets / staffing	✓	✓
Pay	12% over 3 years	13.5% over three years

CAN WE HAVE FAITH IN ELMER FUNKE KUPPER?

While John McFarlane plans to hold on to his mega-salary until 2006, media speculation rates the very youthful Elmer Funke Kupper as the 'man most likely'.

In the recent senior management reshuffle, Mr Kupper retained his role as head of personal banking and wealth management, but now reports directly to McFarlane.

The Australian's banking writer Tim Boreham reported that the reshuffle was another endorsement for the 36-year-old Mr Kupper, who has had a meteoric rise through the ranks.

Kupper, a former McKinsey & Co consultant, joined the bank in 1995, and now runs almost all the local retail operations.

According to Boreham, McFarlane's recent decision to stay at the bank has quashed the leadership aspirations of the old guard, including Mr Hawkins.

Restoring Customer Faith is Kupper's acid test - it will be interesting to see if he can win back customers.

But first, FSU members would like to see if Mr Kupper can restore their faith.

Restoring faith in women?

ANZ Management board of 12 now has only one woman in the team, Elizabeth Proust. How much faith can we have in a mostly male management team that presides over a mostly female staff?

WILL THE ANZ RESTORE STAFF FAITH?

Revitalising retail operations is crucial to ANZ's strategic goal of one million new customers. But restoring staff faith could be the acid test.

FSU@Work spoke to Union Organiser Karen Kearney about the Doncaster area pilot of Restoring Customer Faith.

'With high expectations from management, the pressure on staff in the Doncaster catchment pilot has been intense,' says Karen Kearney, one of the FSU organisers responsible for ANZ retail branches.

'Despite the pressure, most staff welcomed the program because it promised a renewed commitment to the retail network and serving customers.

'Their enthusiasm was driven by a genuine desire to deliver better service and return the ability to help customers back to branches'.

Essential to the bank's Restoring Customer Faith plan is the devolution of more authority and decisions to the local level. In the pilot, the catchment acted as a 'stand alone' business, with the manager given more say in key decisions like staffing and rewards.

There was also a concerted (and welcomed) effort to give local managers assistance from all parts of the bank with direct lines to senior people who could get things done immediately.

'Staff felt a positive change of attitude from "up-the-line". Raising issues and stating problems were no longer regarded as negative or whinging. Some managers felt they were finally being listened to.'

Fancy titles but no extra staffing

A 'conciierge' position was introduced as part of existing roles. It was a meet & greet concept that was initially implemented for all day on Monday, Thursday and Friday and any other peak periods.

The Catchment's Manager allowed managers to vary this when it caused problems (but no extra staff were provided). There was an arrangement that staff from other centralised areas and Head Office go to branches on the days before and after public holidays to do the 'conciierge' role.

'Feedback about the Conciierge role was very good. But as usual, many members raised the need for extra staffing to make it reach its full potential. However security concerns were mentioned by some members.'

Upper echelons of the bank seemed to take the conciierge pilot very seriously. A large number of people opted to take training to enable this frontline position.

'A number of members commented that it was very positive to see "big wigs" having to face customers face-to-face,' she said.

'But they did wonder how long that interest will last?'

Higher expectations, again

With the so-called restored faith came many new expectations. The catchments are expected to be involved with the community. That translates into staff being expected to participate in community activities.

'That would be ok if you didn't have to go back and catch up with the work in the branch, or get paid overtime to attend,' Kearney said.

The new position of Service Quality Champion raises some interesting questions for managers. While the job description is yet to be clarified, speculation suggests the new position will concentrate on compliance and help managers with administration tasks.

Naturally, managers were concerned about what they will be expected to do with their new found freedom (don't worry it won't mean spending more time with the family!) 'Will managers be expected to spend more time visiting customers? How much of this will need to be outside normal working hours?' asks Kearney.

FAITH?

Targets, training and staffing

Typical feedback from members said it was great to see such effort and attention put back into retail - frankly people in branches were feeling pretty much left out!

However, the longstanding branch issues remained despite the changes - targets, training and staffing.

'It will all be just a waste of time if targets are unrealistic, training is out of work hours and staffing is inadequate.'

After meeting with many of the staff in the catchment, Kearney said the pilot had done little to restore staff faith on these issues.

'Staff didn't feel that much had changed. Staffing is still inadequate. There is still no time for training during work hours.

'Many felt it was just another change that would create just as many problems as it would solve.'

Kearney said it was interesting that all the branches were repainted prior to the pilot and all will be refurbished in the next 3-4 months, with more open space for sales desks.

'After seeing the splash of fresh paint and shiny new sales desks, you could be forgiven for thinking it was all about sales rather than service,' she said.

The good, bad and the local

Having the authority to help customers at the local level is great, but with that comes a swag of other local decisions - including staffing and rewards.

'The Catchment Manager has much more control. This makes his/her manner, attitude, personality a large factor in staff's working life.'

“ We really need this program to work. But the bank needs to do something about the bullying and intimidation of staff. ”

FSU member (name supplied)

'We can only wonder how staff concerns about local decision will be handled,' speculated Kearney.

Kearney also said the catchment staff feared the 'special' support would disappear after the scheme expands to cover the entire network.

'They fear the assistance and flexibility given to the pilot area, such as the availability of senior staff who can make things happen, will disappear and staff will again be too fearful to raise issues.'

'The staff don't expect to see John McFarlane acting as concierge again after the pilot has finished!'

RESTORING THE RURAL BRANCH - WELL ONE AT LEAST!

After closing over 450 branches and cutting 14,000 staff in the last ten years, the ANZ will open a new branch in Koroit (near Warrnambool in Victoria) on 1 July 2002.

The new branch will open for the same hours as the local NAB branch, which is set to close its doors on 26 July!

According to the ANZ press release, the ANZ felt that people in the Koroit area value face-to-face banking and that opening the branch was to be part of their Restoring Customer Faith.

As they say, one swallow doesn't make a spring!

Ambition



Knowing the tricks of the job search game can give you the advantage.

Here are the top hints from the FSU Career Centre:

1. Most finance vacancies aren't advertised in newspapers.
2. Employers expect resumes to be tailored to the job.
3. It's completely acceptable not to put your age or marital status in your resume.
4. The key to performing well in an interview is in the preparation you do before you get there.
5. The person who gets the job offer is usually the person who performs best in the interview, rather than the person who is most qualified/experienced for the job.
6. Financial advisers and people with lending and superannuation experience are currently in high demand.
7. Finance employers prefer candidates with tertiary qualifications for almost all jobs.
8. Being able to prove that you have good communication and interpersonal skills is critical.

Visit the FSU Finance Careers Centre at www.fsunion.org.au where you can search for finance job vacancies and get up-to-date advice to help with your resume, job search and interview preparation.

If you're looking for a job in Melbourne, register with our employment agency, FSU Employment. Call 1300 366 378 to tap into our professional network and get help updating your resume and finding a new position.

Proudly boasting the biggest workload in Australia.

seek.com.au No.1 for the job.

Photo: Kylie-Jane Hunt



Holly Richardson, member from IMA, enjoys her Dine Out discount at Vialetto - check their menu out at www.vialetto.com.au.

Express Lane

FSU DINE OUT AND SAVE MONEY

With the FSU Dine Out card, members get big discounts on meals and accommodation at over 1,000 restaurants and great hotels.

FSU member Holly Richardson (pictured at Vialetto in Melbourne) says the 20% discount means one night out pays for a whole year's worth of great benefits.

The card is easy to get and use. Members can purchase cards from the FSU for \$16.50 by completing the application form mailed with this magazine. Then it's a simple matter of choosing a restaurant from the extensive list and making a booking! Most restaurants offer 20% off (up to \$25) and most hotel room rates are 50% cheaper than rack.

FSU@Work took a sneak peak at the list on-line and found some great offers, including:

- ✦ Melbourne's bustling city: Zuchini, JJ's at Crown, Hairy Canary and funky Rhumaralla's
- ✦ Perth's popular Northbridge area: La Zippola, Denpasar Moon, The Greek and Vino Vino
- ✦ Adelaide's trendy North Adelaide area: Beyond India, Coco Corner Thai, Ha Long Bay and sophisticated Katts.

Call FSU Member Benefits on 1 300 366 378 for more information.

COULD YOU BE A WORKPLACE REP?

Take this quiz to find out if you qualify.

1. Are you an FSU member? Yes / No
2. Do you think employees should be treated with dignity and respect? Yes / No
3. Are you keen to see achievable workloads, realistic targets and fair pay? Yes / No
4. Are you interested in learning some new skills, like negotiating, facilitating meetings and communication? Yes / No
5. Would you like to develop the confidence to represent yourself and your colleagues with your manager? Yes / No

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, we want to have a chat with you. Call your union office and find out more about becoming an FSU workplace rep.

COMPARE MEMBER ADVANTAGE HEALTH AND SAVE

Member Advantage Health provides you with a choice of private hospital insurance policies at highly competitive rates. Compare our rates, just like the following comparison with two major competitors, and see the savings for yourself.

*Top Hospital Family cover with no excess (yearly)					
Health Fund	VIC	NSW	SA	QLD	WA
*Member Advantage Health	\$1,513.03	\$1,236.85	\$1,299.40	\$1,236.00	\$1,154.95
*Health Fund One	\$1,877.65	\$1,435.45	\$1,620.25	\$1,599.70	\$1,332.00
SAVING	\$364.62	\$198.60	\$320.85	\$363.70	\$177.05
*Health Fund Two	\$1,817.05	\$1,401.25	\$1,460.65	\$1,551.45	\$1,240.50
SAVING	\$304.02	\$164.40	\$161.25	\$315.45	\$85.55

30% Federal Government rebate reduced from premiums *Contributions rates have been compiled from publicly available information Rates current as at 6 May 2002.

Member Advantage Health also offers you a selection of Dental and Ancillary tables that return member benefits based on the actual cost of the service up to the generous benefit maximums. Choose either 60%, 70% or 80% Dental/Ancillary packages.

For more information, contact FSU Member Advantage on 1300 853 362 or visit our website www.member-advantage.com/fsu

UNION MEMBERS GET MORE

Union members earn up to 43% more than non-members, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data. The latest stats show that union members earn an average of 15% or \$99 a week more than their non-union counterparts.

Union membership up

Latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that for the second year running, the number of workers who belong to a union has increased. According to the bureau there were 1,902,700 union members in Australia in August 2002 - 900 more than 12 months earlier.

Women learn more about unions

The Anna Stewart Memorial Project is an on-the-job training experience for women, providing the opportunity to find out more about how unions work.

During the two weeks of the project, participants attend formal training sessions, where they can meet each other, discuss their experiences and expectations and learn about trade union organisation and issues. For more, please call Annie on 03 9261 5400.

Australia and US lag on maternity leave

After July, when New Zealand legislation comes into force, Australia and America will be the only two countries in the Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) not offering mandatory paid leave when women take time off to give birth.

The ACTU is preparing a claim in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission seeking a minimum standard 14 weeks' paid maternity leave, which would keep in line with International Labour Organisation standards.

Hearsay

St George: Staff at a branch were told to buy their own toilet paper - apparently they use more than their quota!

Westpac (BME): Opening hours might change back to 9.30 am!

ANZ: Hearsay has discovered the ANZ's criteria for branch closure: a/ near an industrial area, b/ near a shopping centre or c/ near another branch - No wonder staff are a bit concerned!

ANZ: CBS Help Desk is moving off-shore to Fiji, sounds like this is happening in the next couple of months as staff are on redeployment now.

NAB: Does anyone know anything about the rumored Christmas party allowance that, if it does exist, nobody ever sees?

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTH

Photo: Kyle-Jane Hunt



In September delegates from across the country will converge in Melbourne for the FSU Biennial

Conference 2002. Over two days of speakers, workshops and debates, the delegates will decide the first steps in a union wide program to help make the union more relevant and effective in the workplace.

When Lisa Guy, FSU rep at ANZ Burnie (northern Tasmania), teamed up with her workmates to protest cuts to part-time staff hours, they got stronger and many hours got saved!

When Pam Nicholas, FSU rep at NRMA Perth, and her colleagues claimed back pay together, they got stronger and they got their back pay!

When FSU members Doug Bastian and Leanne Black (pictured above) at Cardlink, Melbourne, spoke up against a non-union agreement, they got stronger and the non-union agreement went down like a lead balloon!

Members working together can be a powerful force for good in their workplaces. Team work can improve staffing, workloads, targets, training and family-friendly policies!

But there are some alarming trends that need to be faced by the FSU.

While there are nearly 2 million Australian union members, the proportion of the workforce who are members is the lowest ever - just 25% of employees. In the finance sector, union membership is 24.3%.

Australia wide union membership has remained static while the workforce has grown. Likewise, in finance and banking, union membership has not kept pace with employment growth. Higher levels of employment loss in banking, where union membership rates are higher, have exacerbated the negative trend.

While membership has fallen, the need for unions has increased. Industrial and employment laws are more complex and more biased towards the employers. The rapid pace of industry change has dramatically increased pressures on staff. Job security has withered as mass redundancies, outsourcing and casual employment become common employer strategies.

Day-to-day work in finance and banking is harder than ever before. There are more sales pressures and shifting targets, longer hours and more unpaid overtime, plus toxic levels of customer dissatisfaction and antagonism.

The FSU Conference will face these issues and look for strategies to strengthen the union, especially in the workplace.

Most importantly, conference will be looking at ways to involve you in the discussion and ultimately in the revitalisation of the union at your workplace.

It's likely that throughout 2003, all FSU members will be invited to have their say on the new strategies. This may happen through workplace meetings, forums for reps or discussion groups on the website. Watch for the November edition of FSU@Work for full details.

One thing is for certain - the strategies for strength begin with you.

Got an item for Conference?

Members are invited to submit items for discussion at this year's Conference.

Agenda items must be approved by Branch Committee and submitted to the National Secretary no later than 31 July 2002.

Contact your Branch Secretary for more information.



Photographer: Fiji Visitors' Bureau - Suva

SIGN UP AND GO PLACES

Join or recruit a friend before 30 September 2002 and win!

Everyone wins a cinema ticket and joins in the draw for a fabulous Fiji 7 day holiday package for two.

Imagine 7 fabulous days in Fiji

The grand prize includes: Adult economy class return airfare tickets from nearest capital city; 6 nights accommodation at the 'Fijian' resort; airport transfers; breakfast; and travel insurance.

Exclusions: Transport to and from departure point, visas, passports, taxes, meals other than

breakfast and all other ancillary costs are the responsibility of the winner. The trip must be taken by 14 October 2003 and departure is subject to the availability of bookings and flights.

Each new member and a nominated member will receive a Village / Greater Union pass.

The promotion is open to members of the Finance Sector Union of Australia (FSU) who 'recruit' a new member to the FSU between 1 July 2002 and 30 September 2002 and those new members recruited between 1 July 2002 and 30 September 2002. Employees and officials of the FSU and their immediate families are not eligible to enter. / The promotion commences on 1 July 2002 and entries close at 5 pm 30 September 2002. / The prize winner will be selected by draw from the names of eligible members of the FSU. The major draw for the major prize will take place on 14 October 2002 at 3 pm AEST at FSU, 321 Pitt Street, Sydney. The prize winner will be notified by mail and their name and address (city of residence) will be published in "The Australian" on Friday, 18 October 2002. The winner's name and work location will also be published on the FSU website on 15 October 2002 / Total prize value is \$3630.12. / The trip must be taken by 14 October 2003 and departure is subject to the availability of bookings and flights. If the winner cannot use the prize by 14 October 2003, the winner will forfeit the prize and the Promoter will not be liable or responsible to the winner in any way. / No special entry form is required. All people commencing membership during the 'promotion period' will be automatically entered into the competition upon receipt of the membership application form. / The judge's decision in relation to any aspect of the promotion is final and binding on every person who enters. No correspondence will be entered into. All prizes must be taken as offered and are not transferable. The prizes are not redeemable for cash. / The collection, use and disclosure of personal information provided in connection with this promotion will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 and the FSU Privacy Policy (a copy of which can be obtained by contacting the FSU). / The Promoter shall not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever which is suffered (including but not limited to indirect or consequential loss) or for personal injury which is suffered or sustained, in connection with any prize offered, except for any liability which cannot be excluded by law. / The Promoter is Finance Sector Union of Australia, ABN 27843406938 of 341 Queen St, Melbourne, Vic, 3000, Ph: 03 9261 5300. / Authorised under NSW Permit No. TPL 02/05414, A.C.T. Permit No. TP02/2148, N.T. Permit No NT02/1868, S.A. Permit No. T02/2116.

Photo: News Ltd



Joy Buckland, FSU President, at the Federal Court after winning her legal battle with the ANZ. The court found the bank acted unlawfully when it threatened her with the sack.

SHE'S A JOY FOREVER

The recent Federal Court case involving FSU President Joy Buckland prompted Sydney Morning Herald columnist Adele Horin to write this tribute to our home grown hero.

Joy Buckland is a member of an endangered species. It's called Australians Who Take a Stand. In Australia increasingly covered by government vendetta, corporate policy and academic vulnerability, Buckland is a national treasure.

You may have missed the news that Buckland won a Federal Court case recently that vindicated her right to free speech. An ANZ bank manager, employed for 26 years, Buckland has been an outspoken advocate for bank employees in her capacity as honorary president of the Finance Sector Union. The bank tried to gag her and threatened her with dismissal if she continued to speak to the media. Justice Murray Wilcox ruled the ANZ had breached the Workplace Relations Act by threatening to sack her. Buckland said afterwards: 'You get people in all jobs saying they are afraid to speak up.'

That has never been her way. I remember my surprise at her outspokenness when I've rung in the past for a comment.

'There's psychological warfare going on in banks,' she once told me. 'Pressure to do more with less ... Just last week a manager threatened to replace female staff with temps.'

This kind of fearless speech is almost extinct in Australian public life; this kind of passion informed by facts. People in a position to take a stand are minding their backs, their funding, their security. Their lips are zipped, or

their words tempered. If helpful, they beg for anonymity. They are worried about the repercussions, and you can't blame them. Dissent is becoming a perilous business.

The Federal Government made an example of dissenting organisations in 1998-99. It withdrew funding from several organisations that had caused trouble, among them the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition, National Shelter, a low-income housing lobby group, and the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation. In particular, this move silenced the dissenting voice of youth. (The Youth Roundtable, which the Government has set up, is a joke.)

As a condition of funding, the Government had required peak bodies such as the Australian Council of Social Services to provide it with at least 24 hours notice of any press statements. This was slightly watered down in the end, but the Government still gets enough forewarning to pre-empt bad press.

WE NEED THE OUTSPOKEN

Right now many community organisations need to be outspoken as several, including Meals on Wheels services, disability services, community legal centres and youth refuges, face closure or reduced capacity due to the Federal Government's refusal to meet increased salary costs won under a new industrial award. Some groups are afraid to take a stand. Migrant and refugee services have been especially reluctant to go public about their plight because of fears the Federal Government may cut off their funding completely.

With terror in the air, the rationalisation for a clampdown on free speech is greater still. The Prime Minister, John Howard, took an air of moral superiority to China recently. He boasted to the Chinese that Australia in the 1950s had rejected a ban on the Communist Party: that's the kind of open society we are. Back home his Attorney-General, Daryl Williams, was defending an anti-terrorist bill that would allow him to proscribe any organisation. He had originally planned to jail journalists who reported unauthorised disclosures, as well.

Passionate debate is a wonderful and necessary thing in a democracy. Currently, passion is the purview of radio shock-jocks. They fill the air with mock outrage, based on wild misrepresentation. That's not the kind of passion I'm talking about.

Joy Buckland is the real thing, passionate and well-informed. She's prepared to take a stand, and she won't be silenced. She's a rare creature indeed.

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