

# fsu@work

.st george/bank sa member magazine

**SIGN UP AND  
GO PLACES**

See page 8



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**July 2002**



**Action at  
Dragon Direct!**



## Statement with Tony Beck

### Uncertain times

The success and independence of St George / Bank SA is crucial to the rebuilding of community support for banks - you provide an important alternative to the big four.

There is cause for concern about the future ownership of your bank. A takeover or

merger will mean heartache and distress for staff.

Your initial feedback has raised concerns about 'Even Better Bank'. I am sure that most of you have had your fair share of change!

Both these concerns emphasise the importance of the new Enterprise Agreement. No matter what happens - new owners, old owners, Best Bank, Even Better Bank - you need the best security and protection that a new EA can offer.

I urge every member to support the new EA, because it's our security in uncertain times.

### Less than 50 cents extra

Union dues will rise from 1st 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).

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

**Tony Beck**  
FSU National Secretary

Photo: Urs Bucher



REBECCA HAYS says the best people to redesign the counter are those who work there!

### REBECCA'S ON A MISSION

Our mission is to design a better counter says Rebecca Hay, FSU

representative on the St George Counter Design Workgroup.

'Finally management have decided to consult with the people who actually work behind the counters.'

Rebecca says some good changes are on the way, such as raising the side counter safe so people don't need to bend as far; providing more counter room by making the printer housing narrower and placing the visual display unit on the ledge created.

'But we are still working on a retractable drawer problem so bulk cash is kept in view of the customer as there is not enough space to work and count cash at present.'

### Express lane



### NARELLE'S WORRIED ABOUT RETRENCHMENT

'My main concern with Best Bank and Even Better Bank - whatever it's called this week - is retrenchment,' says Narelle McLaren

In a recent survey of FSU members, 80% said job security was a major concern. That's why our claim in Enterprise Bargaining is to increase the maximum payout for longstanding employees and to ensure that casual service is recognised.

'EBB must also be a huge concern for people with kids who really need some sort of job security.

'Pay is also an issue for me. I'm an asthmatic and need regular medication, and with interest rates on the way up, the cost of living is not matched with fair pay'.

But Narelle has no worries about her workmates. 'The main thing that keeps me here is the fantastic people I work with.'

### IT'S MUSICAL CHAIRS SAYS GAIL

'We are forced to play 'musical chairs' because there are not enough seats,' says Gail Brown, St George Rockdale

'We only have 3 stools in the branch, which is obviously not enough to go around. It is not a sit-down branch, but we are on our feet all day and wouldn't mind the occasional break'.

At Rockdale full-timers work 7.5 hrs with a ½ hr lunch break. And part-timers work 5-6 hours with just a toilet break. 'That's a lot of hours per week on your feet. Even the 19 year old guy is complaining!'

Gail says the staff are concerned about thrombosis and possibility of varicose veins. 'It's affecting people's health and productivity - it's hard to concentrate properly.'

FSU@Work is sure the other Gail has a very nice seat at her desk!



Photo: Tony Lewis

PAULINE SIMCOCK says the bank lost a good call centre through Best Bank. She's now worried about pressure to make sales.

### PAULINE SAY IT'S NOT ALL BETTER

'With over 10 years in the Bank I've seen my fair share of changes,' says Pauline Simcock, Bank SA Toorak Gardens.

'Best Bank had positives and negatives. Most changes were positive, including streamlining of procedures, such as dealing with foreign currency, cheque processing and cheque dishonours. Some of the procedures are so much easier now. We have access to a lot more information on our screens. A future positive will be the upgrading of the front office terminals and counter structures.'

'But, we lost a good call centre, and many experienced staff who will be hard to replace. Another huge loss has been caused by the reduction of the 'hands on' training centre - we are now required to do most of our training online, which presents difficulties at branch level.'

'My main difficulty is the pressure to make sales - I was employed as a teller, but am now required to sell, and believe me, we feel the heat if we don't.'

'It is too soon to comment on 'Even Better Bank'. Only to say that I don't understand why we need to have labels on things. Just do it and make sure it works.'

# PACKAGED STAFF WILL BENEFIT FROM EA CLAIM

**Negotiations towards the new Enterprise Agreement have commenced with both parties presenting their claims.**

The union claim focuses on a fair pay increase and improved employee benefits, achievable targets, better quality training and access, improved access to leave entitlements and better job security.

The union claim was endorsed by 98% of the members surveyed.

A feature of the current claim is the large number of items that will benefit packaged staff.

Many packaged staff mistakenly believe that the EA does not apply to their conditions - when much of the EA has a direct impact of key parts of their working conditions.

Specific claims that will interest packaged staff are:

- Legal protection of the Enterprise Agreement.
- 'Superannuation Salary' should be increased from 80% to 100% of package value, and paid on your incentive payments.
- 1% July increase to SGC should not be absorbed into your TEC.
- The choice to un-package or review your package mix on an annual basis and on promotion or transfer.
- Mutually agreed targets that are clearly measurable and achievable within reasonable hours.
- Enhanced protection in the case of outsourcing.
- Increased cap on severance pay for retrenchment from 85 weeks to 104 weeks.
- The 2.5% promotional increase should be lifted to 5%, and not deducted from your annual salary review increases.
- NSW packaged employees should receive access to flexible bank holiday consistent with holidays in other states.
- Restrictions on working unreasonable hours, and that you are properly rewarded for the overtime you work.
- Improvements to long service and maternity leave.

Photo: Urs Bucher



Jodie Couper-Lal (second from left) says 'I now know more about my own rights in the workplace.' Also pictured (L to R) are Garry Hardy, Lisa Wright, Paul Cashman and Laura Mommone

## DIRECT ACTION GETS RESULTS

**The reps at St George Direct in Parramatta are some of the most dynamic reps FSU has ever come across.**

The reps joined the refurbishment committee, a working group committed to updating and improving the workplace structure and design whilst improvements are being made to the direct call centre at Parramatta. They won the right to design a chill-out room, organised the inclusion of a BBQ for staff, coaxed management into conducting a noise assessment, persuaded management to agree to send regular emails to staff to keep them informed and consulted of the changes being made and pushed for a mock up of new workstations.

'It is a good feeling to be able to help your workmates and give advice on how to sort out any problems they have,' says Paul Cashman, FSU Rep.

Jodie Couper-Lal, another FSU Rep, says becoming a rep has been a very rewarding experience. 'I now know more about my own rights in the workplace'.

The team are preparing a campaign to help prevent staff being forced to arrive for work 5-10 mins early to log in to systems, ready to take their first call at their rostered start time.

The eager bunch produce a newsletter, keep a comprehensive notice board, and have fortnightly meetings - it's definitely Direct Action.

### 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 - Ciccutto, McFarlane, Morgan and Murray - rate as gods!



My Account

## GOOD SERVICE NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE

### After 33 years, a member\* gives her account.

'Back then we provided a lot of good old-fashioned customer service', she says. 'Service fees should have been higher then! Now everything's automated, yet banks are charging through the nose. I guess it's a sign of the times.'

'Over the years we've seen so many changes. The first time round, even the second or third, staff cuts and restructures are heart-wrenching. But after so many disappointments, you have to get used to it. Most of us are quite blasé about 'Even Better Bank'.

'But there are still some staff who are understandably anxious and concerned about what will happen with their job.'

'Otherwise we are left in the dark and there is little consultation these days. At least Ed O'Neal used to communicate. The new head has not even introduced herself. Voicemails and emails come through, but this lady has no face - she's not there to answer questions or voice concerns to.'

'In all honesty there are a lot of unhappy people working here. Appraisals are becoming harder and many good employees feel they deserve better.'

'I understand that everyone has to make a profit these days, but there has to be some sort of stop to the greediness. How much can fees increase?' \* *Name withheld by request*

# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE FOCUS GR

What happens when you get ten St George / Bank SA staff in a room and ask them to talk shop? The FSU found the answer to this and many other questions when it held eight discussion groups of bank staff (member and non-members) in Sydney and Adelaide. After reading this account, we're sure you'll wish you were there ...

'We didn't need to push people to talk', said FSU Industrial Officer Rosanne Kerlin, one of the organisers of the groups. 'Everyone relished the opportunity to have their say. They said the union should organise more groups like these!'

The FSU uses 'focus groups' to help it formulate its enterprise bargaining claims. The groups are used to supplement membership surveys, feedback from workplace reps and information gathered from workplace visits.

The groups work by giving the participants an opportunity to speak openly and confidentially about their workplace. Participants often report that it's the first opportunity they've had to put forward their ideas.

The ideas are collated and the themes are drawn out to help inform the enterprise bargaining claim.

In St George and Bank SA the groups focused on what the participants felt about working at the bank and how the enterprise agreement could be shaped to help them.

### What's good about St George / Bank SA?

Friendly co-workers and a positive team environment were the best things about working for the bank. People enjoyed working together and liked to help each other.

They also enjoyed the flexibility of work, such as the variety of hours, because it helped them meet other commitments, such as family and study.

The focus on customer service was another big positive. The staff enjoyed the reputation that both Bank SA and St George have for customer service. One Adelaide participant was very direct about her view - 'Bank SA has respect unlike the big banks.'

While enjoying the team spirit and reputation of a 'smaller' bank, the staff felt the bank was big enough to offer variety and prospects for advancement.

Supportive and skilled management was also cited as a feature of the bank (but of course this varied from workplace to workplace), with bank shares and the social club also getting a positive wrap.

In Sydney the staff at Kogarah were in no doubt about the bonuses of their location, with childcare, gym, cafeteria and parking on offer.

### But plenty needs improving

Like any scorecard or school report, there's always room for improvement. And in these groups there was little doubt about areas that need work.

The most wanted improvements related to pay, career and communication. With remuneration, concerns focus on the pay scales relative to other banks.

Participants felt that the bigger banks offered better pay and conditions - especially when it came to the National Australia Bank.

People also said it was hard to plot a career in the bank. They said it was a shame because it was a good job, but where does it lead.

The issue that got everyone's blood pressure soaring was communication and favouritism! Staff often found they were the last to know and weren't consulted enough on matters that affect them. And when it came to performance pay and promotion - it was who you knew, not what you knew that was important!

# GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Other areas that could be improved included:

- ❖ Staffing - not enough staff was a day-to-day pressure
- ❖ Loss of employee benefits - staff liked home loan discounts, fee free accounts, free bank cheques - they wanted them back!
- ❖ Lack of respect from Sydney management for BSA
- ❖ And appalling conditions at Parramatta Direct, especially lack of parking, childcare, and poor air conditioning.

## Communication about ownership is crucial

So is job security and redundancy protection! It would be an understatement to say staff were concerned about the potential for a takeover/merger of the bank. This was an issue that had the potential to undermine everything positive about working at the bank.

Many participants had been through mergers and acquisition before and they were not looking forward to another round of heart-ache!

Participants report a wide range of rumours and speculation, but concluded that they needed the strong RRR (Redundancy, Redeployment and Retrenchment) clauses in their Enterprise agreement.

The ultimate conclusion - when can we do this again - we like it when we get a chance to have our say!

### Are you a packaged employee?

**Myth #1:** Packaged staff can't belong to the FSU

**Myth #2:** The enterprise agreement doesn't effect packaged staff.

**Fact # 1:** Many packaged staff are union members - all St George and Bank SA staff are welcome to be members.

**Fact #2:** The union claim has many items that will be of benefit to packaged staff. Why not ask an FSU rep for more details.

“ Many participants had been through mergers and acquisition before and they were not looking forward to another round of heartache! ”

## THE SCORECARD

Good	Areas for improvement	
<p><b>Retrenchment package</b> - but many questions about what takeover could mean.</p> <p><b>Family friendly sick leave</b> - positive about sick leave / personal carers leave - don't have to lie if child is sick.</p> <p><b>Maternity leave payment</b></p> <p><b>Breaks</b> with the observation that not everyone gets to take them!</p>	<p><b>RDO's/flexi-time</b> - more say over hours</p> <p><b>Unfair targets</b> - urgent need to make targets realistic/achievable.</p> <p><b>Pay increase above inflation.</b> Recognition of staff's contribution to profit and demands to meet with continual change.</p> <p><b>Training - better quality &amp; access.</b> Don't want all training on-line. More scope for career progression.</p> <p><b>Staffing</b> - staff cuts have gone too far. Hard to get annual leave and, flexible bank holiday when you want it.</p>	<p><b>Fix grades &amp; pay discrepancies</b> between same positions and between BSA &amp; St George.</p> <p><b>Improvement and protection of staff benefits</b> - plus more childcare</p> <p><b>Overtime</b> - isn't being paid. Part-timers should get overtime for extra hours. Should be optional to work public holidays. Also shouldn't have to log on before official start time</p> <p><b>Better higher duties payment</b> - no incentive to do it. \$5 a day less tax is pathetic.</p>

## 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](http://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](http://seek.com.au) No. 1 for the job.

Photo: Kyle-Jane Hunt



Holly Richardson, member from IMA, enjoys her Dine Out discount at Vialetto - check their menu out at [www.vialetto.com.au](http://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: Zucchini, 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
<b>SAVING</b>	<b>\$364.62</b>	<b>\$198.60</b>	<b>\$320.85</b>	<b>\$363.70</b>	<b>\$177.05</b>
*Health Fund Two	\$1,817.05	\$1,401.25	\$1,460.65	\$1,551.45	\$1,240.50
<b>SAVING</b>	<b>\$304.02</b>	<b>\$164.40</b>	<b>\$161.25</b>	<b>\$315.45</b>	<b>\$85.55</b>

# 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](http://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: Kylie-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, out-sourcing 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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