



# AFSU REPS NEWS

# THE AGENDA



This newsletter is aimed at keeping FSU Reps informed of union activities to assist you to carry out the critical role you play in the workplace. Please take this publication to work with you and display it prominently for everyone's information. The Agenda can be accessed electronically by visiting the FSU website at [www.fsunion.org.au/News-Views/Publications](http://www.fsunion.org.au/News-Views/Publications).

## Message from the National Secretary

**As the year draws to a close we can look back on a solid year of campaigning right across the country, with the direct involvement of FSU reps.**

In 2008, the union welcomed over 800 new workplace reps, taking our total to over 3,500. FSU reps are the face of the union in finance sector workplaces, and it's terrific to see the number of reps steadily increasing.

Support, by way of training, was provided to over 600 reps this year. With the confidence FSU reps gain from training, together with incentives such as the Join Online and Win promotion, and the rep recruitment challenge to be trialed in Western Australia in the new year, we may see the union grow as we face, not only the ongoing challenges presented by modern day industrial relations, but the challenges to our industry presented by the global financial crisis.

With international and local companies laying off staff amidst the turmoil, and continued reliance on offshoring, it is even more important to have a strong union in your corner, and the union can only achieve this strength by growing the membership.

Information, tools, tips and downloads are now available on a section of the FSU website, specifically devoted to FSU workplace reps. You will need your membership number and your surname to access this section of the website: [www.fsunion.org.au/Workplace-Representatives/default.aspx](http://www.fsunion.org.au/Workplace-Representatives/default.aspx)

An online forum is available so you can post questions or comments for other reps, and stay connected to one another.

One of the greatest hurdles before us in the coming year is predicted downsizing of the finance sector. This means that despite the union's lobbying and campaigning efforts, many of our colleagues will lose their jobs. Union members facing change in the workplace, or facing retrenchment, redundancy or redeployment will be looking to their union reps for help.

If you need help or support yourself, in order to meet the needs of members in your workplace, please contact your FSU Organiser for advice.

Over the Christmas period, I hope you enjoy some time away from work with family and friends, and refresh yourself in order to continue the fight for the protection of our rights at work in 2009 and beyond.

## Reps take it to the Board



St George and BankSA Reps and FSU staff with Leon Carter outside the St George EGM

**After six months of campaigning in St George and BankSA workplaces, FSU reps from around the country converged on the St George Bank Extraordinary General Meeting in Sydney on 13th November, to take members' concerns about the merger with Westpac Banking Corporation directly to the St George Bank Board.**



Pre-EGM Briefing at the FSU office

Some of these reps talked to The Agenda about what it was like to undertake such a daunting task.

**Gloria Page**  
BankSA, Northern Territory

*I felt very strongly about opposing the merger, even though I knew it was a fait accompli.*

*We won the battle on the day. In the room were the Mum and Dad investors and staff, and I got the sense that about 95% of them felt the same way as we did, but we were never going to be able to beat the corporate vote.*

*My main concern is that Westpac may use the Global Financial Crisis as an excuse to cut jobs and close branches before the three years is up – it's a real possibility. I felt good saying what I said, and trying to get some guarantees for me and my colleagues.*

**Pauline Zagari**  
BankSA, South Australia

*I was extremely glad I was there, to be a part of it, to be able to speak up and be heard.*

*I know we negotiated a very good Agreement and it is dear to my heart. When they showed us the proxy figures I felt so overwhelmed. I did not expect a total landslide! It was hugely disappointing.*

*We're not giving up. We'll keep fighting to keep our jobs and our entitlements until the end!*

**Yvonne Songer**  
Bank SA, South Australia

*I'm passionate about protecting our rights, and it meant a lot to me to go to the EGM and speak on behalf of members.*

*I was nervous, and it was daunting, but once I started, I just kept going. It helped that most of the people in the room were on our side.*

*When they put the vote up on the screen I was devastated. There still a fight ahead to keep our Agreement. There's still a fight to protect the jobs of back office staff, who don't have the security of the three year condition placed by the Treasurer.*

**Susanne Pearce**  
St George, New South Wales

*I felt it was very important to make a stand and tell the directors the impact that the merger would have on everyone involved.*

*It was uplifting to realise that a hell of a lot of people were against the merger and sobering to realise that big business don't appear to care about the same things we were concerned about.*

*The fight is still on.... just in a new venue!!!! We earned the respect of customers and shareholders by taking a stand.*

*I hope they'll support us when we are negotiating terms and conditions with Westpac, for all staff in the future.*

**Greg Owens**  
St George, New South Wales

*I wanted to go along to the EGM to say something about not just the merger, but about offshoring, which is something I find distasteful for an Australian company to do. Cutting costs by employing people offshore is not something that will pay off in the long term. Customer services are also suffering right now.*

*I had a mixed reaction to the outcome, and was disappointed in the end result although it was expected. On one hand I was pleased that people on the floor were mainly against the merger, but on the other hand I was surprised with the high percentage of the proxy vote that supported the merger. Democracy can work in funny ways.*



St George & BankSA Reps outside the EGM

### Next steps

At the time of approving the merger, Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan placed conditions on Westpac, that included retention of the St George brand, branches and ATMs for the next 3 years, and a requirement to engage in consultation with the Finance Sector Union.

This was a direct result of the sustained and professional campaign conducted by FSU members and concerned community members.

The FSU is meeting with Westpac to progress talks on entitlements and conditions for employees at St George, BankSA and Westpac, and will keep members informed of any developments.



## Anna Stewart Memorial Project 2008

The Anna Stewart Memorial Project has been run since 1984 through most State Trades and Labor Councils to increase women's involvement in the union movement through training.

The FSU Vic/Tas branch recently sponsored **FSU NAB Rep Sharmin Mays** to participate in the project.

*"I've been a rep for 5 and a half years, and heard about the Anna Stewart Memorial Project from the FSU Organiser visiting my workplace.*

*During the two week project I have:*

- been to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to hear part of a case the FSU were running about unpaid overtime;
- attended an FSU induction session for new staff at a bank;
- been to a reps meeting;
- visited a retail bank branch to talk to members and potential members;
- participated in an information session at a large CBD workplace;
- observed strategy and planning meetings, and;
- attended an LEC meeting.

*As a result of the project I have a greater understanding of how the union operates, and a greater focus on my role as a rep.*

*The project has made me want to do more as a rep in the workplace, and has given me greater confidence. I recently did a refresher course for reps, and that got me revved up again.*

*I was surprised by how hard the job of an Organiser is, but I would possibly consider being an Organiser in the future."*



FSU NAB Rep Sharmin Mays

### Sharmin's tips for Reps:

- Don't get discouraged by people with negative attitudes.
- Sign up for programs like the Anna Stewart Memorial Project and Union Summer.
- Keep your training up to date, and do refresher courses if they are available.

## Hints and tips: Representing members

FSU Reps can play a supportive role in the workplace, when members are required to attend a meeting with management, by being present and if required, representing members at these meetings.

**Here's a handy guide to help you if you, or a member in your workplace, is called into a meeting.**

### For members:

- You have a right to know what the meeting is about before you attend
- You have the right to representation
- You have the right to take a reasonable time to think about your response, which could be after the meeting
- You have the right to a copy of any official record of the meeting

### For reps:

- If you are asked to represent a member who has been called into a meeting, you are there to ensure the members rights are protected and that they are treated fairly
- Let management know you are representing the member at the meeting, so you can be released from your duties, and so the people you are meeting with are expecting you
- Before attending the meeting, let your local FSU office know that the meeting is scheduled, and what it's about. The union needs to record this, in case the matter escalates and the union is asked to step in
- Take notes at the meeting, and request a copy of any official record of the meeting
- You have the right to speak at the meeting
- If you think it's appropriate, you can request the meeting be adjourned so you can have a discussion with the member, or seek advice from the union office
- After the meeting, contact your local FSU office so the union can make note of what happened at the meeting

## WA Reps prepare to Pop the Question

FSU Reps in WA are preparing to participate in a trial recruitment project over the first quarter of 2009.

The union appreciates the efforts that FSU Reps make, whether that is canvassing the views of members, providing information and assistance to members, or assisting to keep union records up to date.

But one of the most valuable things FSU Reps can do is help grow the Union. It is through strength in numbers that members have a strong and influential voice and can make real change happen in finance sector workplaces.

From 1 January 2009 until 31 March 2009, all FSU Reps in Western Australia will be able to access real rewards for their efforts in growing our Union.

At the end of the quarter, every Rep who recruits new members will be rewarded with a voucher for the store or service of their choice. The more members recruited, the greater the value of the voucher. Workplaces already boasting 100% membership will receive a gift from the union to acknowledge this achievement.

In December, Reps in WA will receive information from the union with more details, recruitment tips, and promotional material to display or distribute in the workplace.

**Good luck WA Reps!**

## ANZ Staffing Audit

ANZ is currently undergoing a restructure of its Australian operations, and the bank is, thus far, being coy about the impact on jobs.

In order to take a snapshot of staffing in ANZ branches both prior to and post-implementation of the restructure, the FSU is conducting a staffing audit over November/December.

The audit will be conducted nationally, and FSU Organisers will be visiting as many branches as possible. Branches in remote locations may be audited by telephone.

FSU Reps at ANZ branches can expect to be contacted soon.

## ANZ Streaky Bay

Dropping in at ANZ Streaky Bay whilst visiting all FSU members across the Eyre Peninsula FSU member Bev Georgiou had this to say to Local Executive Secretary Debbie Black.

**"It's good to see our Union being proactive across the country by completing these staffing audits with the support and assistance of FSU members".**

Seated - Bev Georgiou, L to R standing - Renee Fiegert, Kylie Little, Debbie Black



## Fridge magnet

Enclosed with your issue of The Agenda is a fridge magnet with the FSU Member Rights Centre telephone number and our web address.

You can help promote your union by placing this magnet on the fridge in your workplace tea-room or kitchen. If you work in a large workplace, and you need more magnets, give us a call and we'll send them out to you without delay.



## Margaret River Accommodation (WA)

*It's just another benefit of FSU membership!*

**Unit 17 Leeuwin Apartments**, is operated by the Finance Sector Union WA Office and is available to FSU members and their families.

**The unit is fully serviced with 3 bedrooms (sleeping 6 people) and offers a host of amenities including:** Swimming pool, 3 heated spas, gym, sauna, tennis court, children's playground and BBQ facilities.

Only 5 minutes walk to Bussell Highway - Margaret River's main street.

### Great rates!

For costs and conditions of booking, please contact the FSU WA office.



### How to book

Contact the FSU WA Office:  
Phone: 1300 366 378 Email: wa@fsunion.org.au

## E-Newsletter

Make sure you don't miss any important information by subscribing to **FSU Online!**

To do so, simply provide your email address and those of your colleagues by visiting the FSU website at **www.fsunion.org.au** and clicking on 'Subscribe to FSU Online' or email to fsuinfo@fsunion.org.au and ask for your details to be updated.

## Next issue of The Agenda

**Due at the end of February 2009**  
Do you have a story to tell? Could other reps learn from the activities reps have undertaken in your workplace? Contact Leanne in Communications (email: **leanne.shingles@fsunion.org.au**) to be featured in the next edition of The Agenda.