

Welcome To Community Sector Solidarity

Solidarity = a community of interests, beliefs and action; standing in unity to overcome structural injustices.

- Are you concerned about the impact of changes to work and welfare legislation on you, your family and the communities you work with?
- Are you worried about maintaining service standards for your clients when you are losing your job security?
- Confused about 'gaps' between the stated values of your workplace and the way they deal with workers?

You have received this information because we think you can play an important role in the fight for workplace rights, particularly in a community sector setting.

Community Sector Solidarity is a group of Union Solidarity. Union solidarity groups have sprung up all over Victoria in response to the proposal and implementation of the new work place laws. These groups aim to stand with Unions in the fight for OUR workplace rights.

This document contains IMPORTANT information on:

1. **What is Union Solidarity?** – An explanation of the umbrella group – Union Solidarity – from where Community Sector Solidarity sprang in response to the draconian “WorkChoices”.
2. **Make Choices Real, Make Opportunity Equal!** - A statement members of Community Sector Solidarity have contributed to, to describe what we stand for.
3. **Community Sector Solidarity Activities.** A description of some of the tasks and ideas we have for how you can be involved.

Who we are?

The network comprising of Community Sector Solidarity brings together concerned people from the community sector, faith-based & union movement communities. We stand together with integrity & passion for workers' rights and 'Community'. We are frontline workers, policy officers and even a couple of concerned managers, ANYONE CAN JOIN US!

The guiding principle shared by Union Solidarity and Community Sector Solidarity, as one of its off-shoots, is solidarity - building strength together and linking back into our every day communities. This might be with the choir you're involved with, your local pub or library, a sporting club or your kid's kindergarten ...In this campaign to save OUR rights at work we have to reach out to all of these people and sites... the people you need to connect with around these important issues are the ones you wake up next to, that you see every day, the places you pass by on your way to work, the places that make your world what it is.

Why is the community sector different?

We hold grave concern for the future of the community sector and note that it is increasingly becoming an arm of the state – containing more middle management and bureaucracy than ever before, reducing the sector to administration of resources and processes, rather than interactions of any depth and qualitative outcomes with communities accessing services.

The Workchoices and Welfare to Work packages have been designed to squeeze marginalized people into low wage, low security jobs. This will affect our work and cause extra pressure on service delivery causing more 'breaching' and an increase in the working poor... and in the meantime we are becoming more and more insecure about our own working conditions, and some workers are being forced to accept working conditions that seem to go against the 'values' of the agency they work for.

Community Sector Solidarity recognises that within the broader communities we play roles in, vulnerable communities exist and advocate for all voices to be heard. We acknowledge that there are broader political changes impacting on the people we work with and quality of services received by 'disadvantaged' members of our communities. It is our stance that the conditions community workers are employed under are intrinsically linked to the quality of service provision to our communities.

If the community sector works together we can fight many of the impacts of these two packages!

We invite you to stand with us.

1. *What is Union Solidarity? www.unionsolidarity.org*

Union Solidarity supports and promotes activities that strengthen unity amongst the community. Union Solidarity builds wide support for workers, unions and communities under attack from the current federal government's Industrial Relations laws. Union Solidarity members' and affiliates' main priorities are in organising and mobilising a united front in mass based activities and campaigns in their own communities, workplaces and unions.

Union Solidarity comprises of a number of community off shoots, mostly these are location based (ie: Melbourne Central, Dandenong and Darebin to name a few)

Community Sector is the first sector based group – come and be part of something historic!

2. Community Sector Solidarity: *Make Choices Real, Make Opportunity Equal!*

Community Sector Solidarity arose in response to the draconian "Work Choices" and "Welfare to Work" legislation implemented by the Howard Government. Community Sector Solidarity is made up of members of union movement, workers from the community sector and faith-based organisations.

Community Sector Solidarity stands for:

- the preservation and improvement of the community sector and all workers' rights;
- equal opportunity to engage in meaningful, appropriately remunerated work, education, family, leisure, personal growth, pursuit of dreams and quality of life;
- real choice and self determination in people's participation in their communities, rather than coercion or force;
- the right for workers and communities to organise and act collectively;
- the stamping out of AWAs & low funding levels in the community sector remaining unlinked to the implementation of AWAs; and
- a community that aims for humane standards in which its members are treated with respect and can retain dignity and self determination over their lives.

Community Sector Solidarity aims to:

- effectively advocate for the wider community to have equal opportunity to participate in all areas of life – meaningful work, education, family, leisure, personal growth and pursuit of dreams.
- collectively support workers prepared to challenge organisations in the community sector to ensure your organisation stands by its own stated community values
- support people to have real choice over their lives and their participation in their communities, with the encouragement of all to involve themselves within their community as they choose and to realise their full potential
- abolish Welfare to Work legislation and work to minimise harm caused in the interim.

Community Sector Solidarity can support you to ensure your organisation stands by its own stated community values. Participate in your union.

In order for the above to be achieved Community Sector Solidarity believes the community sector, faith based organisations, unions and community members must stand strong and united in the fight to abolish 'Workchoices' and 'Welfare to Work'.

3. Community Sector Solidarity Activities

What Are We Asking You To Contribute?

- A small amount of time and energy;
- Utilise your existing networks – e.g pigeonhole all the workers at your workplace, forward information to your e-lists and other forums you regularly access, keep your colleagues up to date with information;
- To be a conduit of information about industrial issues both pertaining to the community sector and more broadly around workers' rights;
- To talk to and communicate with others about these important issues in OUR community – how they impact on you, your friends & family, vulnerable members of our community and community 'values' overall.
- Community Activities: Attend picket lines and support people, leaflet your neighbourhood, run stalls in shopping centres.
- Join your local Union Solidarity group - to find out where they are go to www.unionsolidarity.org (if there isn't one in your area or sector – START a NEW group
- If you are not a member of a union, consider joining!

What Does All That Really Mean?

- Community sector workers are great at networking and do it as part of their jobs & lives every day. Community Sector Solidarity is attempting to develop key contacts across the community sector who will commit to distributing information about Solidarity actions and the like. We seek to have information about issues for workers reach as broadly across the sector as possible and that means recruiting people from various sub-sectors and agencies to be involved in ensuring that the networks they are involved with receive critical information in a timely way, so they can be involved.
- Depending on the level of involvement you want, you may be part of a phone or email tree.
- You would receive emails +/- SMS that inform you about issues for workers happening in your local community or sector. Some examples of current live issues and previous campaigns can be found on www.unionsolidarity.org – take a look!

How Do I Get Involved?

- Call one of the Community Sector Solidarity contacts – check the website for details – www.community.unionsolidarity.org or email on community@unionsolidarity.org
- Or respond to the person who forwarded this to you

What else could I do about these issues?

- Join and get actively involved in your union...become a delegate or contact...talk to others about joining & getting active, to build the power of workers' voices in your workplace.
- If you are on the road doing outreach – spend some time at a community assembly or picket while you're out and about – see the Union Solidarity website or call one of the contacts for more info.
- Take part in the next **Day of Action (Thursday NOV 30 7am – 11am at the MCG)** – get together with some work mates or friends, make sure your workplace is represented! Most unions also march together...
- Inform yourself – there's a wealth of information out there...
 - Log on to Australian Council of Trade Union - Your Rights At Work website www.rightsatwork.com.au ; You can read stories from workers, post your own and look at Community Forum info for your area.
 - Vic Trades Hall Council – www.vthc.org.au
 - Union Solidarity – www.unionsolidarity.org
 - Community Sector Solidarity – www.community.unionsolidarity.org
 - Welfare to Work – www.welfareto.org.au
 - Australian Services Union – www.asuvic.asn.au