

# FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions

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## Why should you join a Union?

You gain the protection of your working conditions and the opportunity to work with others for the promotion of your general living standards.

Whatever line of work your in there's a union for you, and the chances are that you will join it. The ASU represents members across Australia employed in a range of service related industries. As a Clerical or Administrative employee you are able to join this Union and become part of the Australian Services Union, North Queensland Clerical & Administrative Branch. But why should you?

## The answer is simple

### PROTECTION

Union activity in the past has built up present standards of wage, salaries, holidays, pensions, sick leave and other working conditions. Much work therefore goes into maintaining these standards, and protecting members' rights to them. For example-

- ensuring the agreed arbitrated wage or salary is being paid for the job being done;
- checking annual leave, long service leave and sickness leave entitlements;
- taking up cases of members who feel they have been unjustly treated in some way either through harsh supervision, the allocation of work or financially.

### ADVANCING CONDITIONS

As well as protecting existing conditions, unions are of course, constantly working to improve the general well-being of their members. This is done by: -

- pressing for wages, and conditions, and improvements in: individual firms, particular industries or through national and state claims (e.g. National Wage Case and State Wage Case, Annual Leave Case, etc.) and through Enterprise Bargaining.
- pressing governments to improve legislation-affecting workers (e.g. Occupational Health and Safety, Compensation etc.)

Trade Unions are not only concerned with immediate work problems. Improved wages alone cannot solve problems such as high prices, the high cost of housing, inadequate education facilities and a whole host of other factors, which affect the well-being and standard of living of their members.

In the past, this Branch has joined with other Branches and Unions in campaigns that have addressed community issues such as keeping jobs in Australia campaign, which was brought about by the sale of Ansett to Air New Zealand, the ACTU OHS Bullying in the Workplace campaign and supporting Medicare and the Public Health System.

## **“But what does the Union do for me and my colleagues?”**

Quite a lot actually, we;

- Negotiate better outcomes on wage issues
- Provide protection and support when you need it
- We assist with promotional appeals
- Provide representation in negotiations with management
- Advise on workplace issues

Every day the Union assists its members in some way and we are working continually to improve wages and conditions even further.

## **“But you get the increases whether you are in the Union or not!”**

True, you do get AN increase. But is it sufficient? Would you get more if all the clerks were in the Union? Just think what could be done with total membership. Your employer would respect you, and your union, just that much more. It is only through a collective voice in the workplace that members can have a real impact. Non-members RELY on members for increases, which is hardly fair. It's like asking your next-door neighbour to pay your milk bill every week.

**“UNITED WE BARGAIN DIVIDED WE BEG”**

## **“I work for a good employer, I can look after myself – why should I join a Union?”**

No matter how good your employer is they can't and won't apply to the Industrial Commission to get your wage increase. In fact, they probably belong to one of the Employer associations, which invariably oppose the union's applications. Just because your employer passed on the increase with good grace, doesn't mean their organisation didn't try to stop you getting it in the first place.

But it is not only about more money. Too many times we cop it on the chin and put up with a work environment that is uncomfortable simply to keep the peace with our employer, supervisor or colleague. Lets face it we spend a good chunk of our life at work so why not be truly happy. The Union is there to assist you and the employer in obtaining a harmonious environment that is comfortable and productive for all parties.

## **“I've never had a wage increase!”**

In most cases this is simply a lack of knowledge or information and not the deliberate intent of the employer. Most employers are not industrial experts and neither are most of our members. However, the Union is. As a member you are updated by bulletins and newsletters on the changing conditions in your field, Clerical and Administration.

By being informed you help not only yourself but your employer by knowing your rights and conditions of employment.

## **“Is there a delegate at my workplace?”**

There maybe but not all workplaces have a Delegate. Ask the Union office and the staff will advise if a Delegate is present in your workplace.

It is members who take an active interest in their workplace who become workplace Delegates. The Union co-ordinates Delegates to provide the following:

- Members meetings so issues concerning all members can be discussed.
- A distribution point for Union information so members receive important information quickly.
- A sympathetic ear to air concerns
- An approachable person to source information regards conditions

In some cases Delegates are not able to answer all your questions but they do have direct access to the Union and its Officials who are always available to assist them.

If your workplace is without a Delegate you still have access to the Union Office and Officials who are available to assist you and if required will attend your workplace. All you need do is ask.

So if you have a query or complaint, don't wait for it to develop – just ring for advice. Your Delegate or Union Officials are no further away than your phone.

## **“Remember.....”**

The Australian Services Union, North Queensland Clerical and Administration Branch is YOUR Union... the staff are there to help YOU and represent YOUR interests. YOU elect the Executives to administer YOUR affairs and hundreds of cases are processed on Your behalf.

The Australian Services Union doesn't set out to make a profit. YOU, the unionist, are the sole beneficiary, and as a member You have access to:

- Virtual Communities - Cheaper computers etc
- First 15mins of Legal Consultation Free
- Access to Money saving discounts and cheaper home loans through Union Shopper
- Financial Advice
- Training for Delegates

## **“So what will it cost me?”**

The membership fee is determined by your terms of employment so for some it is less then the cost of joining a Gym. Fees at present are adjusted annually and cover the cost of running the Union for that period.

To find out the current rate, call us on (07) 4771 2873.

## **“How do I join?”**

It's easy. Download the membership form from our website, fill it in and sign the form (don't forget to sign it) and send it to the Union Office. Send forms to:

ASU-North Qld Clerical & Admin Branch  
PO Box 135  
Townsville Qld 4810

Or simply ring the Office and we will send you out the application form and subscription deduction form if required. Office Telephone: (07) 4771 2873

Fill the forms in and return to the Office. You will then receive by mail your Membership Card and Number, plus the Union Shopper Directory.