

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

CHILD SAFETY, YOUTH & WOMEN

www.together.org.au/csyw

Child Safety, Youth & Women 2018-19 campaign

2018 was a big year for union members working in Child Safety, Youth and Women. As negotiations continue on your new collective agreement, we wanted to give you an update on what's happened and where we are now. Throughout the year you took part in major industrial actions, something CSYW hasn't seen for a very long time! There were some important wins. For the first time, you have been able to negotiate a stand-alone agreement. This cleared the way for real progress on the issues affecting your work and the children, young people and families you work with. The actions you took made the Department pay attention to what needs to be done in CSYW.

Coming into 2019, members will be keeping up the pressure on the Department to make an acceptable offer addressing your claims for safer workloads, better classification outcomes, safe workplaces and fairer wages.

Every three years public sector union members bargain with their employer, to seek wages and conditions that are better than the safety net, your Award. In previous bargaining rounds, the wages and conditions of workers in CSYW have been set by the 'Core' agreement covering staff in a wide range of Queensland Government departments and agencies. This agreement was due to expire 31 August 2018. In 2017 Child Safety delegates endorsed seeking a separate agreement to ensure that issues specific to your work start to be addressed. With the machinery of government change later that year, creating the Department of Child Safety,



Youth and Women, it was clear that Youth Justice and Youth Detention members also had some specific issues that a stand-alone Departmental EB could address.

In June 2018, delegates met to prepare for bargaining and discuss key areas of concern. They started formulating a log of claims to set out what needs to change in CSYW. Delegates elected a steering committee to guide the campaign and attend negotiations.

During June and July delegates and organisers visited workplaces to discuss the log of claims. This gave members the opportunity to raise any further issues and talk about how to prioritise claims once bargaining started. You strengthened an already extensive delegate and activist network to prepare for the campaign ahead. Delegates also organised a meeting in head office to discuss what a stand-alone agreement means for CSYW: that only CSYW members get to decide what is an acceptable offer to fix the systemic issues in your workplace. Two weeks later the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) granted a 'scope order' that allowed members in CSYW to negotiate your own separate agreement.

The formal bargaining process began in July. Delegates from across many different parts and regions of the Department—Lauren and Vish (Child Safety); Doug (head office);

INSIDE >>>

STATE WAGE CASE

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

KEY EB ISSUES



Authorised Alex Scott Together Branch Secretary

Patrick, Nicola and David (Youth Justice); and Ash, Lindsay, Desmond, Brad, Phil, Jon and Stuart (Youth Detention)—attended negotiations and illuminated some of the urgent improvements needed in CSYW. Members put on a fantastic show of strength to kick off the campaign with a sticker day on 31 July. The sticker day made it clear to the Department how important the issues raised in negotiations are to CSYW members.

With negotiations underway, your bargaining team was sending out updates by email, phone and even a podcast. The steering committee met every week to monitor the progress of negotiations and the organising campaign.

As Together members you have the right to participate in protected industrial action. Protected industrial action is action you can take during bargaining that is protected by law. It needs to be authorised by a vote of members called a Protected Action Ballot. In August members voted up a Protected Action Ballot on a range of actions, including work bans and stoppages.

You launched protected action in conjunction with Child Protection Week (2-8 Sept). Members distributed material on the bargaining campaign, asking stakeholders to show their support by contacting the Director-General. The following week you stepped up the campaign, putting work bans in place on admin tasks and non-critical casework. From the middle of September members in service centres across the state started taking one-hour work stoppages to send a strong message to the Department.

Further Protected Action Ballots were passed in September for more extensive action by CSYW members at head office.

Thanks to pressure from the campaign, on 26 September the Department made an offer. Unfortunately, the productive discussions your delegates had achieved in negotiations were not backed up with written commitments from the Department. The Department didn't come to the table on important issues for CSYW and what they did offer didn't go far enough.

You know that CSYW needs more than a band-aid approach, it needs fundamental change. That's why your steering committee and delegate group decided not to accept the Department's unacceptable offer and push for a better deal in conciliation. In conciliation, your union and the employer continue negotiations with the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission acting as an "independent umpire". We wanted the QIRC's help in getting the Department to address some of the critical matters that need to be addressed to turn things around in CSYW. Even with the best negotiators sitting around the table, the way to win real improvements in your workplaces is by taking action: the strength of your union comes from the strength of members on the ground.

In response to the unacceptable offer from the Department, members on the ground passed a Protected Action Ballot to escalate the campaign. On 17 October worksites across the state participated in work stoppages up to half- and full-day, in addition to maintaining and escalating work bans. A number of service centres took further action, including Mackay service centres holding three separate full-day work stoppages!

The steering committee endorsed a state-wide day of action for 16 November. Delegates spent the next month gearing up for 16 November, having conversations with members

and potential members about the campaign and why it was important to participate in the biggest action of the campaign so far. As more and more service centres signed on to take action, we sent out text messages to members asking if their workplace was next. It has been a long time since members have been this strong and this active. When the day came, over 25 worksites took part, in most cases holding half- or full-day strikes. As a result of your action, Minister Farmer agreed to a meeting with delegates in December. Your action forced the Department to pay attention!

The state-wide day of action coincided with the second meeting of conciliation. A number of striking delegates attended the QIRC during negotiations. There were three more sessions in December with another in January. In these meetings your negotiators have sought improvements to CSYW that will make a real difference to your working conditions and the children, young people and families you work with.

What are Protected Action Ballots or PABs?

PABs are a ballot of members that allows them to take protected industrial action. In CSYW, PABs were held to authorise the following actions: distributing information about the campaign, work bans on non-critical administrative and casework tasks, work bans on Ministerial and DG information requests, and work stoppages of up to 8 hours.

**TABLE 1
WAGE INCREASE FROM
STATE WAGE CASE**

Top pay point	State wage increase
AO2.8	3.5%
AO3.4	2.9%
AO4.4	2.39%
AO5.4	1.96%
AO6.4	1.67%
AO7.4	1.4%
AO8.4	1.22%

**TABLE 2
NATIONAL WAGE AWARD
INCREASE VS STATE
WAGE INCREASE**

	National wage increase	QLD wage increase
2011	3.40%	3.40%
2012	2.90%	2.90%
2013	2.60%	2.60%
2014	3%	3%
2015	2.50%	2.50%
2016	2.40%	2.40%
2017	3.30%	3.30%
2018	3.50%	3.50%

THE CAMPAIGN SO FAR...

2018

Members endorse wages claim



"Wages Matter" campaign activities

The CSYW EB Steering Committee, made up of delegates from across the Department, met at least fortnightly from July onwards, if not weekly. Delegate teleconferences were held frequently throughout the campaign.

Members endorse EB claim



Protected action ballots: work bans commence

Over 40 worksites took action



Unions win 3.5% increase to Awards

See left for PAB explainer.

1 William Street Rally



CSYW members in the CBD attending a rally outside 1 William Street on 17 September. Rallies were also held in various regional locations from Cairns to the Coast.

Regional rallies



Rolling Strikes in CSYW



Parliament House Rally

On October 30 a rally was held at Parliament House in Brisbane. Buses ferried workers from all over South-East Queensland.



Full offer on non-wage issues



Day of Action!

On November 16, members in worksites from the Torres Strait to Mermaid Beach and everywhere in between took action to show how serious they were about getting a decent offer from the Department. Most members went on strike for a half or full day!

Delegates reject offer



NO DEAL!



Conciliation



Key EB Issues

One of the key issues for members has been addressing the workload crisis currently facing Child Safety, in particular. In fact, members have made it very clear that a process to address unreasonable workloads is a 'deal breaker'.

Throughout negotiations, delegates had some productive discussions with the department about a tool or framework to address workloads, building on many years of work done before that. Unfortunately, in mid-January, the Department announced that they were walking away from using caseloads as a measurement of workload for Child Safety Officers.

Members have been very clear that factors such as intensity and complexity mean 'not all cases are created equal'; however, a caseload of 15 has been recommended in both the CMC and Carmody inquiries for ongoing intervention cases – and members can speak to how the intensity and complexity of current cases has made the need to cap or limit caseloads even more urgent. The Department's latest proposal is another attempt to walk away from proactively addressing this urgent issue, and delegates have reaffirmed that a caseload cap or upper limit must be set to begin to fix this crisis. There has been enough discussion about the problem of unsafe workloads in Child Safety – members need action, and they need it immediately.

An issue that compounds workload is the inability to attract and retain experienced staff within the Department. Workers in CSYW deliver vital but frequently challenging services, and deserve to be recognised for this. Members are tired of watching experienced colleagues walk out the door to other roles – with less workload pressure and frequently better remuneration – and have only asked that their pay be competitive in comparison to other jurisdictions as well as similar Queensland government roles.

The creation of CSYW through the 2017 Machinery of Government change, bringing together Child Safety and Youth Justice in the one department, this created opportunities for both streams to work closer together as they work with a number of the same clients. However, the MoG also highlighted that these workers are not remunerated at the same level for similar jobs. The Department's response to this claim so far has been that they do not believe there is a need to review classifications post-MoG. Delegates are continuing to pursue this matter.

Direct service delivery AO2 staff have also campaigned strongly to have the Department recognise the importance of their work and to be remunerated properly. AO2 staff are often the first point of contact with families and other stakeholders and they provide essential administrative support to the workplace. The Department has, so far, said they would consider 'individual cases' of employees working above their classification. Delegates disagreed, noting that it was not a case of an individual here and there, but a systemic undervaluing of these critical roles. We have reiterated this position to the Department and are awaiting a further response.

Of course, there are a number of other claims that members have put forward to address through this process, and once an updated full offer from the Department has been received members will see it.



Current state of offer

Delegates have been negotiating with the Department for eight months over an extensive log of claims that members formulated in early 2018. The Department has made some concessions; however, the key issues around workloads and attraction and retention remain unresolved. This is a snapshot of what has, and hasn't, been put on the table at the time of writing.

Not agreed:

- An upper limit or caseload cap for Child Safety workloads
- Any reclassification/classification claims
- A percentage wage increase on existing wage rates (not expired EB rates)

Proposed:

- Face-to-face personal safety training for all staff who work in Child Safety and Youth Justice Service Centres (with online training available for other employees)
- Enshrining the 1:4 staff/young person ratio in Youth Detention
- A commitment to review the following policies, in consultation with Together, within 6 months of the certification of the EB:
 - ❖ Recruitment & Selection
 - ❖ Temporary Employment

- ❖ Casual Employment
- ❖ Leave
- ❖ Hours of Work
- ❖ Flexible Work Arrangements

- Developing a Remote Area Incentives approach in consultation with Together
- Implementing a Safety, Health & Wellbeing framework
- Reviewing the PO2/3 progression scheme in consultation with Together
- Continuation of employment security, consultation, union encouragement and other 'base' provisions carried over from the Core EB

In addition to the above, the Department has proposed, as part of recruitment, that CSOs with the appropriate experience can be appointed at PO3 level upon commencement.



Where are we now?

Conciliation discussions are continuing. So far, the Department has made some minor concessions, but they haven't made satisfactory progress for members in CSYW. The Department needs to follow up its productive discussion with an offer for real and meaningful change for you and the important work you do.

If the Department doesn't come to the table with a significant offer addressing your log of claims, members might decide to send the agreement to arbitration. There is a conciliation hearing scheduled for 1 March.

Over the course of the campaign we grew significantly as workers in service centres across the state saw that the only way to win change is to work together and take action. Our strong delegate and activist networks got even stronger over the year.

Bargaining a stand-alone agreement has meant that only members in CSYW can decide what is an acceptable offer for you. CSYW has shown how a group of workers can strike out on their own and start to address the issues that are important to them.

In February, delegates and members are considering their industrial options to continue to put pressure on the Department, including new and additional work bans and seeking the intervention of Minister Farmer.

In a few weeks, members will be asked whether or not they want to accept the Department's offer as it stands. If we are still too far apart on the key issues and members reject the offer, that means your agreement will have to be arbitrated – which is a court-like process that can take some time.

In early March, your delegates will be meeting to talk about the next steps in your collective agreement campaign. We know that the only way to secure real change in CSYW is to be active, engaged and united. When we work together, we win!

