



AWU Position statement

Local Government in Queensland

2014/15



Local Government in Queensland

Local government is responsible for delivering vital services that Queenslanders access every day, such as roads and waste management to parks and libraries. These services help build communities through our interaction with them, through the connections and engagement they foster and importantly, through the secure and local jobs that they provide. All of Queensland's communities, but especially its rural and remote communities, look to local government as a major employer, which contributes both to the economic and social wellbeing of their local area.

The Australian Workers' Union, Queensland Branch (AWU) represents 4,000 local government workers. These include construction, grounds and maintenance workers and cleaners, kitchen staff and carers.

Our campaign 'Stand Up, Fight back'¹ aims to defend our communities from the Newman Government's attack on service quality and local, stable work through its plans to privatise services and 'modernise' local government awards.

Join us in our campaign to **Stand up and Fight Back** against the LNP's assault on Queensland's local government services, workers and communities.

Ben Swan

AWU Branch Secretary

¹ <http://www.standupfightback.com.au/>

AWU POSITION STATEMENT:

The AWU is committed to protecting Queensland's local government services, workers and the local communities that they serve and calls for:

1. Recognition and support of local government's critical economic and social role.

Local government – its services and employment opportunities – are the lifeblood of Queensland's communities. Local government supports a large and more diverse workforce than any other public sector employer.¹

Yet the Abbott Government's short term and ideology-driven approach to cost saving threatens each and every one of our communities, as councils struggle to deliver services with a 3 year funding freeze.

2. End to plans to privatise local government services.

The Newman Government's privatisation policy is forcing local government to tender out its services – to become an 'enabler' of service provision and no longer 'a doer'. Yet privatisation is a short-term, political fix to cut costs, not improve services.

Through privatisation companies profit, whilst service quality is cut and local workers' jobs become insecure and low paid. Local government jobs must remain **fair, local and secure**.

3. Fair and independent award for local government workers:

The AWU is fighting the LNP's attempts to strip the wages and conditions of council workers across Queensland through the award 'modernisation' process, whilst imposing a one-sided and restrictive enterprise bargaining framework.

This is a direct attack on the basic terms and conditions of their employment with the amended bargaining provisions removing key industrial conditions relating to job security, consultation, workload management and contracting out removed from agreements.

4. State political, policy and financial support to councils.

In addition to the federal funding freeze, cuts to social, health and education budgets will have the knock-on effect of increasing demand on councils' services. Yet Newman's Government is only tokenistically challenging their pals in Canberra.

The State Government needs to step up to ensure that local government is equipped to meet growing demands and deliver infrastructure to meet Queensland's needs.

5. Investment in the local government workforce.

*Investment into the skills of council workforces, particularly in those areas with lower education and skills development opportunities, helps to produce resilient and independent communities. **Cuts only further damage fragile, local communities.***

Investment in council workforces is also crucial given the ageing workforce, over a third of local government workers are over 50,² if local government is to meet future demand.

6. The freedom of local government workers to choose to support each other, develop their skills and improve their workplace through the union movement.

*This is a **basic right of all citizens in developed nations**, which the Newman Government has significantly curtailed.*

The Government shows a complete lack of respect for the union movement, its members and the role it plays in representing low paid, vulnerable workers as well as in improving and implementing policies such as health and safety in the workplace.

7. The permanent change of the Natural Disaster Relief and Recover Arrangements (NDRRA) rules to include day labour costs.

*The use of day labour not only **saves money and time** but also draws on **local expertise and invests in local resilience and communities.***

Outside contractors must only be used where absolutely necessary and as a supplement to existing public sector workforce capacity. NDRRA funds are essential to disaster recovery, particularly in remote, rural Queensland where revenue sources are already squeezed and the AWU strongly supports the continuation of the fund at current levels.³

² http://acelg.org.au/sites/default/files/ACELG_Workforce_Survey_Executive_Summary_-_FINAL.pdf

³ <http://qld.awu.net.au/sites/qld.awu.net.au/files/awu-file/AWUEO%20submission%20-%20inquiry%20into%20natural%20disaster%20funding.pdf>

Ben Swan

Queensland Branch Secretary
The Australian Workers' Union
Level 12, 333 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, Qld 4000
Phone: 07 3221 8844 | Fax: 02 8005 3300
Website: <http://www.awu.net.au> | Email: secretary@awu.org.au