

MEMBERS UNITED POLICY PLATFORM

CPSU ELECTIONS 2026



FOREWORD TO MEMBERS UNITED 2026 PLATFORM

The Community and Public Sector Union is a union comprised of members who have a wide variety of skills. All CPSU members think critically and thoughtfully – they wouldn't be public sector unionists if they didn't.

The Members United campaign recognises this and has set about developing a comprehensive policy platform that clearly articulates exactly what reforms we intend to fight for in the event of our victory. This platform is an exercise in transparency, in that we are telling you what we intend to pursue. It is an exercise in accountability, as members will know exactly what our aims are and what to measure our success against.

Critically, it is an exercise in showing leadership – we owe it to members to show that we have thought very deeply about all facets of the union's activities, and we have developed a comprehensive set of positions and a rationale to each of them. We believe that CPSU members deserve nothing less from a slate of candidates seeking to lead the union.

And ultimately, we ask for your vote for a mandate to implement and fight for these proposals. This is a platform about rebuilding members' power. Every proposal in this document is directed to winning better pay and conditions; rebuilding density and strike capacity; putting members back in charge of their union; and restoring our public sector union as a force for social good in civil society.

Finally – we challenge the incumbent leadership team to publish a platform as comprehensive as this one. We challenge them to demonstrate to us that they are serious thinkers about the future of our union. In 2023 the incumbents ran on their record, but after another three years of inflation-adjusted pay cuts, the CPSU membership will want to see a plan. Members United has that plan.

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INDUSTRIAL DEMANDS



CHAPTER 1: INDUSTRIAL DEMANDS

Win pay rises that beat inflation

It is axiomatic that a union is there to defend the standard of living of its members. However, through the Coalition period from 2013 through to 2022 and then under Katy Gallagher's pay deal from 2023 to now, in the context of the post-COVID cost-of-living crisis, inflation-adjusted salaries for public servants have gone backwards significantly – see Figure 1 in the appendix of this document for supporting evidence.

This trend cannot be allowed to continue. Our top priority in terms of our industrial demands must be to win real pay rises that beat inflation and reverse the trend of real salary decline. The key role of a union must be to ensure that union members do not become poorer. The CPSU leadership has failed at this basic task for many years.

This is particularly important for generational renewal – younger members are much more sensitive to below-inflation offers because they tend to be at the start of their careers, their housing costs are high and they are often saddled with HECS debts. Inspiring young people to join the labour movement by involving them in vibrant campaigns to win real pay rises is essential to secure the future of the CPSU and the labour movement more generally.

Introduce a four-day week with no reduction in pay, following the 100:80:100 model

Members United has been at the forefront of advancing the four-day week campaign, and we intend to put it as a core industrial demand in future bargaining rounds. We would do this on the 100:80:100 model – one hundred percent of the productivity, eighty percent of the hours, one hundred percent of the pay.

Where there are roles that require an occupant to be present for operational reasons, we will bargain that this challenge is overcome in one of two ways: hiring additional workers or extending penalty or overtime rates to anyone who must work the additional hours. This will bolster public sector employment and, where there are labour market constraints, the pay packets of workers who cannot work a four-day week.

Ultimately, we contend that a two-day weekend is not enough. Nearly all complaints or concerns about the four-day work week that are put to us were precisely the concerns of the bosses when the weekend was first fought for by the labour movement. We deserve more leisure time to enjoy our lives. It is too much to work eight hours a day, five days a week, forty-eight weeks a year, for fifty years (give or take) – we deserve more control over our lives, and a three-day weekend is a key step to massively improving the quality of our lives.

Bring back the Commonwealth Super Scheme and fight for dignified, early retirement!

Members United supports a serious campaign to restore secure, dignified retirement for public sector workers, including by examining the case for bringing back a defined-benefit-style Commonwealth superannuation scheme.

The old Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme closed to new members in 1990, but it represented an interesting case study as to how public sector conditions were economy-leading and have since been wound back. Its closure, and the shift away from earlier retirement pathways formed part of a broader deterioration in public sector employment conditions. Private sector workers have also been harmed by this deterioration, as private employers no longer need to compete with the public sector as 'model' employer. This forms part of the overall narrative of continual increases to the retirement age and longer working lives.

We raise this because we believe that good, dignified early retirements are something not just public servants deserve – this is something the whole workforce deserves. It is not acceptable that workers are increasingly having to work until 67 or older before they can retire, and consequently sometimes their health deteriorates or they pass on before they can enjoy their lives after paid employment.

Actually Bring Back the Commonwealth Employment Service!

We support the CPSU leadership's campaign to bring back the Commonwealth Employment Service! But we're astounded that so little progress has been made beyond modest trials. We are already now in the second term of an Albanese Labor Government, and bringing this back is included in the Australian Labor Party platform. However, the Albanese Labor Government has explicitly ruled out bringing back the CES in spite of the CPSU's campaign and affiliation.

The fact of the matter is that if we are to make meaningful progress, we need to move quickly, building the capacity of the state to do this at precisely the same rate that John Howard moved to dismantle the CES in his time. That means aggressively moving against the private, for-profit job network and building out a restored CES as a matter of urgency. We have seen the capacity of the state scale up and out in times of crisis – we need to take precisely that mentality and apply it to protecting the unemployed from the current, undignified for-profit system.

We contend that the CPSU leadership's soft and slow approach to the Bring Back the CES campaign is indicative of their broken ideology of progressive incrementalism. We will not operate that way. However, we agree with the CPSU leadership in that the restoration of the Commonwealth Employment Service is the natural first priority for the expansion of the public sector.

Bring back AusAid!

Members United supports restoring AusAID as a stand-alone, properly resourced public agency and fighting for the expansion of Australia's foreign aid budget from just 0.18% of Gross National Income in 2025 to the UN target of 0.7% of GNI. With Australia budgeting \$5.209 billion for aid in 2026–27, reaching the target would require investment of approximately \$20 billion annually at current income levels. This is increasingly urgent following the dismantling of USAID and the abrupt withdrawal of US-funded programs across much of the Global South, which has disrupted essential health, food security, education and humanitarian services.

Expanding foreign aid could support approximately 5,000 additional APS jobs if AusAID were restored. This estimate is based on the former AusAID's staffing level of 1,724 APS employees administering an aid program of approximately \$5.2 billion before its abolition. For CPSU members, this means secure, skilled and unionised public-sector employment while advancing progress on poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, climate justice, strong institutions and the broader UN Sustainable Development Goals. Critically, Members United supports foreign aid only in a context of genuine self-determination by aid recipient countries.

Reform the unfair Fair Work Act

Members United recognises that the right of workers to band together collectively to withdraw their labour is a fundamental human and democratic right. This right is severely curtailed by the Fair Work Act. We are committed to campaigning for enhanced recognition of workers' rights to strike through winning changes to the Fair Work Act to remove constraints on the ability of workers to collectively organise. The right to strike must not be limited to bargaining periods.

A democratic, regulated, pro-worker approach to AI in the public service

Members United will demand that agencies deeply engage with the issue of the use of Artificial Intelligence in the public service. Decisions need to be made by humans, not bots. Public service work is human work that is based on comprehensive research, reflection and engagement between the bureaucracy, the community, and the elected ministers. These relationships of trust, engagement, and free and frank advice cannot be replaced by computer systems. The public service builds and maintains democratic values, processes and structures and the public interest. Corporate AI systems do not share these values and goals. To the extent that any Artificial Intelligence applications are utilised, they should be publicly and democratically controlled with clear transparency and safety guardrails.

Members United are concerned about the current way that AI is being used in the public service without proper laws, regulation, enforcement, training and transparency. It is not good enough that agencies are left to do this work on a case-by-case basis. The use of AI in recruitment and decision making amplifies the biases in the training material. This is deeply concerning for our inclusive service and society. We demand the establishment of a robust, well-resourced and comprehensive regulatory agency in Australia to deal with Artificial Intelligence as a matter of urgency.

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY



CHAPTER 2: INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Set membership density targets and report progress regularly to members

Presently, the CPSU leadership only reports on raw membership numbers. They simply never calculate and communicate the size of the membership expressed as a percentage of the APS, ACTPS and NTPS workforces within CPSU coverage. This is a critical omission because it is possible for the union to grow while being outpaced by the growth of the public services more generally. And density is the critical metric for the union's industrial power – because it measures how much of the workforce can be mobilised to withdraw their labour power in strike action.

As our membership numbers are publicly available in election results and our operating reports, there is no strategic benefit to not calculating and publishing our density levels. The Australian Public Service Commission could calculate the union's density (including by agency) with reasonable accuracy if they chose to do so. The decision not to provide this information to the membership is inexplicable, save for the fact it obviously reflects poorly on the leadership themselves.

We will implement transparent density reporting regularly to members, so they are fully apprised of our level of industrial power. We will set density targets for all members to involve themselves in the work to build that industrial power. This will give the whole of the union meaningful objectives for real density growth, rather than simply reporting nominal growth that masks a decline in industrial power.

We will continue work to update and modernise the union's databases so that workplaces are as mapped as clearly as possible, and involve delegates in the work of that mapping.

Establish a robust strike fund, supported by the central CPSU budget

Within our financial capacity, we will do everything that we possibly can to limit members' income losses as a result of taking strike action. This inherently involves strategically investing in a strike fund over time. This will improve our industrial power because it means that members can strike harder and longer, and that the cost of that is socialised collectively and spread out over time rather than borne in the immediate by the member taking industrial action. As an immediate priority, we will invest \$1 million in a fighting fund in our first year of office.

This will create a situation where our industrial action is more effective, putting us in a better position to win better pay outcomes for members in any bargaining round because we can carry out expanded strike action.

Develop an ongoing education program on the significance of strike action

Everything significant that unions have won has ultimately rested on the employer understanding that the union is capable of taking industrial action. That is how unions win things. The current CPSU leadership is tepid on this self-evident fact of unionism. We are not a professional association – we are a union, and a union must be ready to strike.

To remedy this, we will develop an education program with a specific focus on the importance of strike action, including an overview of the process and strategies and tactics for carrying it out.

Launch a tailored Political Economy for Public Sector Unionists program

It's our view that to understand your industrial position in the public sector, unionists need a broader understanding of the economy and the social structures that govern it – namely, that we currently live under capitalism, and in particular neoliberalism. This is qualitatively different to the social-democratic Australian capitalism established post-war.

This contextualises many of our industrial demands and our industrial strategy – things that public sector workers used to enjoy are now no longer provided for. Living standards have declined over the last forty-five years. A public sector worker in the 1970s would find it absurd that an EL1-level APS worker could find it difficult to afford a two-bedroom apartment as a single person in Canberra, or that they would likely have to work to 67 years old. Further, many of the services that public sector workers used to provide have now been subject to privatisation and are now done on a for-profit basis.

Consequently, we need a historical and economic account of why that happened, including the underlying class relations, an analysis of inequality and the struggle over national income, and where public sector unionists are situated in the broader Australian working class. We will collaborate to work with experts inside and outside of our union membership to develop a tailored program that explains key Political Economy concepts to public sector unionists in an accessible yet empowering way.

Review the current curriculum for delegates' training

We will review delegates' training to include a sharper focus on the skills associated with the Organizing4Power program and the methods articulated by prominent organising theorist Jane McAlevey. We will focus on being critically engaged with the latest and leading practices in trade union organising and provide delegates with the skills and methods they need to organise in their workplaces.

We will support delegates and members to develop and use escalating structure tests in our workplaces that engage current members and their colleagues to take tangible action during bargaining and other campaigns. This would include pledges, petitions, rallies and strike actions. We will support members in having actual structured organising conversations with training, scripts, debriefing and tracking our success. We will support members to identify key decision-makers to influence them to win pro-union outcomes. This will be crucial for the rebuilding of the union.

Engage in both broad-based and targeted strike action

We will engage in a rolling perpetual education campaign which builds the knowledge and capacity of the union to undertake service-wide strike action, rather than a long-run strategy of keeping members in a low-information environment about protected industrial action and then relying on pockets with high density once bargaining kicks off.

However, we will locate specific areas of the public services that would cause a high level of disruption were the workers engaged in those services to take industrial action. There are some sections of the Australian Public Service with technical skills located in critical areas where, if those workers could be persuaded to join their union and carry out lawful industrial action, that action would have outsized effects on the operations of government.

These are the areas where the union must pay specific attention to while it builds density across the whole of the public sector, so that we are ready in the short-term to conduct actions which will be difficult for the employer to ignore and consequently more likely to induce them to cede to our demands at the bargaining table. This will be a key plank of our approach at attempting to win outcomes quickly, rather than over multiple bargaining cycles.

RULES, STRUCTURE, AND DEMOCRATIC CULTURE



Empower members to understand and navigate union structures

At present, new CPSU members are not given any kind of how-to guide to understand how the organisation they have just joined functions. There is little in the way of any explanation of how the union's democratic structures operate – from members' meetings to delegates' committees to Section Councils, to the Governing Council, to the Executive Committee.

The way members are oriented to the union is still fundamentally in the approach of service-model unionism. If they are lucky, they might be contacted by their local delegate or patch organiser upon joining or receive a call from the Members' Service Centre. But they are not educated on how to directly engage with the union structurally.

We intend to change that – every member will be provided with a comprehensive induction, including a how-to guide explicating clearly how they can exercise their democratic power inside the union. This content will also be supported by video resources and a podcast-style audio recording to support members' learning styles and time constraints in an accessible format. When you join a business unit in the public service, your first day you are usually provided with your organisation chart – the CPSU should not just do the same, it should do better!

Strengthen Section Councils and Delegates' Committees as decision-making bodies

We will decentralise power away from the Executive Committee and Governing Council and put it back in the hands of the Section Councils and Delegates' Committees. We will create limited discretionary budgets for Section Councils for the purposes of running their own local campaigns in their workplaces without needing to seek funding approvals from the Executive Committee.

In the past sub-branch agency delegates' committees functioned as schools of unionism: generalising both the experiences of experienced activists and skilling up new rank-and-file activists. We will restore sub-branch delegates' committees as forums that draw rank-and-file activists into the life of the union and increase active membership participation.

We will amend the "minimum necessary formalities" rule to ensure that Terms of Reference are established for each Section Council and Delegate's Committee, making it clear how they ought to operate and how they are empowered to provide pathways forward for members to achieve their interests. They will no longer function as focus groups for the Executive Committee – instead, they will function as the empowered structural units of the union that they should be, determining their own priorities and campaigns.

We aim to strengthen the democratic control of the union by rank-and-file members through democratic decision-making as the basis for organisation, industrial action and all relevant discussion including workplace, agency-based and cross-agency meetings.

Revitalize a culture of mass meetings, ensuring proper meeting procedures are followed

We contend that a great failing of the CPSU's current culture is that mass meetings, in effect, no longer occur. When there is a general meeting of members, they are usually both framed and structured as "briefings" where members are provided information and a call to action, alongside a Q&A component.

We will do away with that. Instead, we will organise democratic meetings that use formal meeting procedure – with a call for agenda items, a draft of the agenda circulated ahead of time, a Chair, a speaking list, and the ability to put and vote on motions. When this happens at a general meeting of members, any carried motions will be referred to the agency's Section Council for organising. Where it is a cross-agency meeting, those motions will be referred to either the Governing Council or the relevant Section Councils as appropriate.

This does not mean that a Members United leadership will not take a position to those meetings. We intend to provide leadership – but we will not manufacture consent for our proposals by depriving members of basic entitlements like democratic meeting procedure.

Further, we will aim for maximum member involvement in meetings. We will rely less on reactive polling to guide our strategy than the incumbent leadership does, and we will certainly not push-poll members towards a certain outcome using leading questions. We intend to provide leadership to the membership in a way that respects their intelligence and empowers them to engage with us critically and constructively.

Restore regional and local democracy through the direct election of State and Territory Secretaries

The appointment of Regional Secretaries by the Executive Committee does not meet the needs of our members. We should return to the approach held in many unions and the CPSU - PSU Group historically, where the Secretary responsible for each state or territory is democratically accountable to the members of that state or territory through direct election, rather than imposed top-down by a national leadership.

We consider it self-evident that the ACT Regional Secretary should be elected by members in the ACT, that the WA Regional Secretary should be elected by members in WA – and so on. This reform will restore a level of regional democracy to the union that was taken away.

We aim to strengthen the democratic control of the union by rank-and-file members through democratic decision-making as the basis for organisation, industrial action and all relevant discussion including workplace, agency-based and cross-agency meetings.

Set nine-year term limits for individuals to serve on Executive Committee and introduce minimum service requirements

The CPSU is a union with over 40,000 members. We are full of members who have all the skills necessary to lead the union. Long-term incumbency of union officials creates a barrier to generational change, innovation and fresh ideas. We contend that three full consecutive terms over nine years are enough for any individual to spend on Executive Committee – after which they are free to return to the rank-and-file, continue to remain engaged with the union’s democratic structures, and provide advice and support on an ongoing basis.

We also contend that any person seeking to become an executive of the Community and Public Sector Union will need to evidence they have worked at least three years minimum within a public sector body in the membership coverage area. We will, in effect, create a rule against our leadership being able to comprise career union officials with no experience in the industry they represent.

To support this change, we will continue to develop rank-and-file leaders within the union to ensure that those with the skills and dispositions to come into Executive Committee are well-prepared to do so, to prevent any skills vacuum arising from outgoing EC members over the nine-year period.

Reform the Governing Council to a whole-of-union structure, with proportional representation (PR)

We will move to a new system of Union elections which prioritises a whole-of-union approach in the governance of the union. We consider that the move to service-wide bargaining has created an opportunity to reform the Governing Council so that all members can vote for all candidates for Governing Council, and that the Governing Council will be proportionately representative to the number of votes received for each candidate or slate of candidates.

While Section Secretaries will continue to lead their Section Councils at the agency-level with expanded resources for decentralised grassroots organising, their position will not automatically convert to a seat on the Union’s Governing Council. There will be no prohibition to a Section Secretary holding a position on Governing Council concurrently except that they will need to nominate and win enough votes to be elected under PR rules.

This creates an opportunity to further develop agency-level organising without automatically tying up agency-level union leaders in the governance of the whole of the union – while also creating an opportunity to break down democratic silos that prohibit a member from, for example, the Bureau of Meteorology voting for a candidate for Governing Council that hails from the Fair Work Ombudsman if their positions and ideas for the union’s direction align with their beliefs.

This will also do away with the majoritarian “winner-takes-all” system which locks out candidates with genuine support across the whole of the union and within their own agencies from being able to be elected to the union’s decision-making structures. This will support a wider diversity of views and experiences in our union’s democracy.

Enhance direct democracy through all-member plebiscites

We will create a viable system of member-led direct democracy by amending Rule 1.13b to introduce a new system for member plebiscite petitions to be launched and conducted on the member portal.

Because of the limitations imposed upon CPSU members being able to communicate with each other across workplaces, agencies, and between the APS, ACTPS and NTPS, it is functionally impossible without effective systems for anyone to organise a member petition sufficient to invoke a plebiscite.

Consequently, Rule 1.13b has become a dead letter. It is never enlivened because the conditions to meet it are impossible. We will implement a system that allows members to communicate for the purposes of member petitions to be developed. This will restore a culture of direct democracy within the union, which was clearly the initial intent of Rule 1.13b.

We will also use the Executive Committee's powers to run significantly more member plebiscites on important questions and put the choices in the hands of members through all-member votes.

Hold an all-member vote on ALP affiliation

One of the significant democratic deficits of our union was that our Union's affiliation to the Australian Labor Party was never put to a vote of the whole of the membership. We will put that right and give members the chance to decide for themselves whether affiliation with the Australian Labor Party is in their interests. Our view is that the current status quo around affiliation cannot carry on – we will turn the matter of affiliation over to the members.

The CPSU membership's vote for or against affiliation will be honoured and actioned at the first available opportunity.

In the event affiliation is ended there is no intent to affiliate the CPSU with any other political parties. If there are any further proposals to affiliate the union to any political party, this will be put to the whole of the membership for another all-member vote.

If the CPSU membership votes to retain affiliation, we will use the mechanism of affiliation to pursue the interests of members much more critically and aggressively than the current leadership does.

**SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS ARE
UNION BUSINESS**



CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ARE UNION BUSINESS

No jobs on a dead planet - take action on the climate crisis

Stewardship is a practice of caring for something that we have been trusted to look after. As public servants and unionists, many of us take this value to heart not just in the way we do our specific jobs, but in our care for the communities we live in and the planet we live on.

The precedent for union involvement in environmental issues exists in the history of Green Bans from the Builders Labourers Federation in the 1970s. A Members United-led CPSU will honour that tradition and work to advance environmental and climate issues.

In bargaining, a Members United-led CPSU will push for the expansion of Community Service Leave from its current limitations to include provisions for a range of pro-environmental activities such as bush cleanup and regeneration, community farming, recycling, and other local initiatives.

Further, a Members United-led CPSU will also push within civil society for a broad, state-led decarbonisation program akin to a Green New Deal in the United States context with a just transition and equality built in as core principles.

Palestine is union business

Australian unions have a proud history of international solidarity – to support the fight for freedom for South Africa, Indonesia, Vietnam, Timor-Leste and more. With Australia recognising the state of Palestine, our union must continue to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Peace and justice are union business! Members United categorically supports the Palestinian people in their struggle against what we say is a genocide being perpetrated upon them by the State of Israel. Our position is consistent with the position of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Amnesty International, and Doctors Without Borders.

Members United opposes antisemitism absolutely, and we also reject attempts to conflate antisemitism with principled opposition to Zionism or criticism of the State of Israel. Occupying a public service role must not constrain an individual's freedom of expression to be opposed to Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people. Members United also supports the position of the ACTU in calling for sanctions on Israel. We support the ACTU's call for an end to all military trade with Israel and an end to the occupation of Palestine. We support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in a free, democratic and independent state. To this end, a Members United-led CPSU would have a higher engagement in social movements that support international peace and solidarity, including movements for justice for the Palestinian people than the current CPSU leadership.

Build an anti-racist, anti-colonial union

The CPSU must always condemn all forms of discrimination and prejudice. Unions support the struggle by Indigenous people for land rights and against oppression, recognising that sovereignty was never ceded. We welcome all workers regardless of background, country of origin, skin colour or religion. We oppose both Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Members United will promote a union that is anti-racist and anti-colonial in orientation. It will be engaged with and provide support to anti-racist campaigns and campaigns for First Nations justice within and outside the workplace. Union members who are victims of racism must be offered sensitive and strong support.

Following the defeat of the Voice referendum, Members United will redouble the CPSU's efforts to support truth telling and treaty processes, engaging widely with First Nations trade unionists and communities, supporting their decisions and campaigns made with self-determination.

Champion the rights of working women — cis and trans — and campaign for LGBTIQA+ liberation

Members United stands squarely against sexism, homophobia and transphobia. These are not minority issues — 60.5% of workers in the Australian Public Service are women and in the 2025 APS Employee Census, 9.5% of respondents identified as LGBTIQA+. We will actively back union and community campaigns to defend and extend the rights of working women — both cis and trans — queer and non-binary people.

The average total remuneration gap between men and women in the public service, while lower than the private sector, still remains too high at 6.4%. As part of our broader fight for pay rises for all workers in real terms, we will prioritise closing the pay gaps between agencies that still exist across the APS. These pay gaps, which see female dominated agencies at the lower end of the pay spectrum, must end.

Achieving a healthy work/life balance is important for all workers and is particularly vital for women, which is why Members United will ensure flexible working arrangements and working from home are available for all workers. We will also make the fight to win a four-day working week a high priority. We will work to extend paid parental leave and ensure it is available to anyone who is a parent or carer, inclusive of gender. Winning equal access to the workforce for women with disability and achieving dedicated affirmation and disability leave is also an important part of our platform. We support dedicated gender affirmation leave for public servants as workers and as carers, and reproductive leave for all workers. We support the right of pregnant people to free safe abortion on demand.

In some instances, for example uncapped family and domestic violence leave, conditions on paper in the APS exceed the minimum National Employment Standards set out in the Fair Work Act. Members United will campaign to make access to these conditions genuinely available to all workers who need to access them. We will push for the public sector to be a model employer and to extend conditions which benefit women and sex and gender diverse workers to the private sector.

Part of our vision for championing the rights of working women includes resisting austerity measures. Defending and extending the vital community services that public sector workers provide is fundamentally important for all working women, including those covered by the CPSU — 44% of all APS workers report having caring responsibilities. When public services are inadequately funded or cut back, this increases the unpaid caring labour which is disproportionately performed by women.

Defend against threats to democracy – including the right to protest, freedom of expression, and human rights

Members United will defend democratic rights, including the right to protest, freedom of expression, freedom of association and the protection of human rights. These rights are not abstract civil liberties separate from unionism. They are the conditions that allow workers and communities to organise.

A union that depends on collective action cannot be indifferent to attacks on protest rights, surveillance, restrictions on political speech or the erosion of democratic accountability. The CPSU should oppose laws, policies and workplace practices that chill legitimate dissent or restrict members from participating in democratic life.

Public servants occupy a particular position in this debate. We are often incorrectly told, implicitly or explicitly, that public service employment requires you to be totally apolitical not just in relation to your work role and on work time but in our personal lives as we interact with civil society as citizens. Members United notes that public servants can and should perform their work lawfully and ethically, but they do not totally surrender their citizenship, conscience or democratic rights by virtue of being a public servant. We will fight to maintain and advance those human rights.

Oppose AUKUS and invest the money in public services instead

Members United opposes AUKUS. The fact of the matter is that AUKUS represents an extraordinary misdirection of public money. If the Albanese Labor Government can find hundreds of billions of dollars for nuclear-powered submarines, then it can find the money to rebuild the public service, bring back the Commonwealth Employment Service properly, lift wages, improve retirement incomes, and fund the services that working people actually rely upon.

We reject the idea that the only way to build serious industrial capacity in this country is through weapon manufacturing. Australia does need advanced manufacturing, sovereign technical capability and secure, well-paid jobs. But those things should be built around social need — housing, climate transition, public infrastructure, scientific research, disaster resilience, public transport and civilian industry — not around a submarine program that ties Australia more closely to the strategic priorities of foreign powers. A stable society can be built by investing in people's needs as well as climate transition work, renewable energy infrastructure, disaster preparedness, public sector capacity, domestic manufacturing, scientific research, cyber capability and secure supply chains.

Members United supports ongoing public scrutiny of the AUKUS agreement, including the independent public Inquiry into the AUKUS security partnership, headed by former Labor Minister Peter Garrett.

FEES, SERVICES, AND OTHER AFFILIATION MATTERS



CHAPTER 5: FEES, SERVICES, AND OTHER AFFILIATION MATTERS

No significant changes to current fee structures or official remuneration.

This aspect of our platform is one of the few areas where we maintain a general alignment with the incumbent CPSU leadership. We believe that the current fee structure and remuneration of officials is generally appropriate. Current CPSU executives are paid significantly less than what a comparable Senior Executive Service member of the APS would be, and we appreciate that. Further, we believe the current progressive fee schedule for CPSU members is equitable.

We will monitor fees and remuneration with reference to CPI and evaluate if we can or need to make any changes on an ongoing basis.

Review the Members' Service Centre

Unfortunately, the Members' Service Centre often disappoints members and delegates in terms of the provision of industrial advice to members in a timely fashion. This has significant impacts for workers in terms of having representation and support at difficult points in their individual cases. This is not to attack the Members' Service Centre workers, who work a difficult role under resource constraints. Our critique is structural, rather than individual.

As a matter of urgency, a Members United CPSU leadership would conduct a review of the MSC and determine whether the current approach to providing industrial advice out of what is effectively a call centre in Sydney is appropriate.

In particular, we will look to determine whether the current model is sufficiently staffed, whether the staff are appropriately qualified in the provision of industrial advice, whether there needs to be greater engagement of employment lawyers in particular cases, and whether the centralised remote model should be abolished in favour of industrial officers appearing on site to represent members in individual matters.

Adopt a constructive and critical stance within the ACTU

We say that while it is important to work cooperatively across the whole of the labour movement, we believe it is important to engage both constructively and critically with the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

For this reason, a CPSU under our leadership would be prepared to dissent from certain ACTU positions where appropriate. Further, we would open a dialogue with the unions involved in the 2024 Trade Unions for Democracy Summit and consider potentially requesting membership of the Trade Unions for Democracy Organising Committee, subject to guidance from the membership as a whole.

CONCLUDING NOTES

AI- use and ethics note

AI-use note: AI tools were used in assistance with formatting, numbering and layout in the drafting stages. Format painter as a Microsoft Word function was letting us down for some reason, essentially AI has made no changes to human-made text; the content, commitments, analysis, and authorial voice remain human-made, as is the graphic design and layout in the final product. As an author's note, the drafter of this platform was a prolific user of an em dash long before AI came onto the scene, and has pared back use to avoid accusations of AI-generated writing. So it goes.

Ethics note: Members United considers positive disclosure of any AI-related tools, and how they used to be important. This disclosure is included to make clear that AI assistance was used essentially for formatting support in draft stages given this was a democratic and group-authored document with many different contributions over a variety of mediums (including Google Form feedback, emails to the drafter, and direct edits in group settings in real time), and the drafter would have struggled spending hours correcting formatting. AI has not been used to replace human judgement or authorship.

Members United remains critical of AI generally, beyond limited applications. AI should not replace human decision-making and there are substantial issues around the intellectual property violations that occurred when major technology firms harvested all the text and art from the internet for use as training data without compensation to the workers that generated it.

Note on non-binding status of this platform and conflict-of-interest considerations

Democracy4CPSU is a non-binding caucus of members which runs the Members United campaign. This platform represents the collectively agreed positions of the group, arrived at through internal discussion and democratic decision-making. It should not, however, be read as automatically converting each position in the platform into the view of every individual member of Democracy4CPSU.

Members of Democracy4CPSU may, at different junctures, have abstained from particular discussions or decisions to avoid any actual, perceived or potential conflict-of-interest risk, including where their work role overlapped with a position being considered in the platform.

CONCLUDING NOTES

Figure 1: APS pay increases, inflation and real wages, 2019–2026

MEASURE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (est.)	CUMULATIVE TO 2025	CUMULATIVE INCLUDING 2026 EST.
APS nominal pay increase	1.2%	0.8%	3.0%	1.8%	1.8%	4.0%	3.8%	3.4%	17.5%	21.5%
Year-ended CPI inflation	1.8%	0.9%	3.5%	7.8%	4.1%	2.4%	3.8%	4.8% EST.	26.8%	32.9%
Real wage change	-0.6%	-0.1%	-0.5%	-5.6%	-2.2%	+1.6%	0.0%	-1.3% EST.	-7.3%	-8.5% EST.

Notes: For 2019–2023, the pay row uses the APSC's weighted median base salary increase across the APS. For 2024 onward, the pay figures use the APS-wide bargaining final offer and exclude the December 2023 one-off payment because it was not incorporated into base salaries. CPI uses ABS year-ended inflation. The 2026 column is an estimate only, based on the AFR's report that Treasury expects inflation in the "high 4s". Cumulative figures are compounded: each year's change is applied to the level reached in the previous year, rather than simply added.