

PROUDLY PRO- WORKER: PRIORITIES FOR WORKERS IN THE 2024 TASMANIAN STATE ELECTION

In 2024 Tasmanians are being asked to vote in the second early state election in a row, while a cost-of-living crisis rages, major economic projects are contested, and important government inquiries to improve the lives of Tasmanians have come to a halt.

There will be no cost-of-living relief without decent wage rises.

Tasmanians need wages that compete in a national market, to be able to afford to live here, and to fix public services. The Tasmanian Government can play a significant role in lifting the wages of Tasmanians and whoever forms the next government will need to be *proudly pro-worker*.

Successful union campaigns for minimum award wage rises, the Aged Care Work Value case, and scrapping state public sector wage caps, have all contributed to recent gains in the wage price index, but in Tasmania these gains are coming from a lower base than the rest of the country.

Tasmanian workers face an unfair and persistent mainland wage gap, currently running at an average of \$218.80 per week or \$11,378 annually¹, which is not simply caused by the mix of industries or job types here.

Our community is suffering because of a recruitment and retention crisis right across the Tasmanian public sector with many occupations and roles paid below those working in mainland states.

To fix services, you need market rates of pay.

Too many employers come to the table with outdated ideas that it is somehow cheaper to live in Tasmania (it isn't) or point to wages policy of State Governments as a guide.

Relief measures such as energy and rental housing price caps have been promised by some parties to help Tasmanians survive the current cost-of-living crisis. But it will always be hard to make ends meet if you aren't being paid enough. Specific action by the Tasmanian Government is needed to close the mainland wage gap.

Tasmanian workplaces are not safe enough. Our existing legislative regime and regulator performance are not deterring employers from cutting corners and putting workers lives at risk. Important work towards industrial manslaughter laws has been stalled by the early election.

The incoming Government must prioritise worker safety and legislate for industrial manslaughter as a matter of urgency.

1. Average full-time ordinary earnings, ABS. "Average Weekly Earnings, Australia." November 2023. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release>.

ELECTION 2024

Unions Tasmania is calling on all political parties and candidates to publicly commit to *proudly pro-worker* initiatives with the express goals of lifting wages, safety and access to public services for Tasmanian workers.

Immediate priority actions for the first hundred days

1. Commit to supporting Tasmanian workers achieve market rates of pay that are nationally competitive.
2. Enact Industrial Manslaughter legislation.

Priority areas for pay, safety, and good governance

- Set a target of growing Tasmanian wages to a level at or above the national average.
- Offer public sector pay rates that attract and retain the workers we need to deliver essential public services.
- Set a government procurement policy that includes wage outcomes as a measure.
- Work together with unions to amend the *Industrial Relations Act 1984 (Tas)* and other relevant instruments to incorporate gender equity measures that have been introduced in federal legislation.
- Legislate for a public sector Gender Equality Act and Gender Equality Commissioner to drive positive change in Tasmania.
- In consultation with unions, review the role of the safety regulator, its staffing, remuneration, and approach to investigations in Tasmanian workplaces.
- To address the rise in silica related disease, support comprehensive health screening for workers in high-risk industries, increased regulatory activity, increased education of Health and Safety Representatives and consideration of appropriate legislative change including whether to expand the *Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure) Compensation Act 2011 (Tas)* to include silicosis.
- Establish a portable long service leave scheme, similar to that in the construction industry, for community services, cleaning and security and other contracting sectors.
- Introduce labour hire licencing laws for all labour hire providers serving the private and public sector in Tasmania and create a compliance unit with the resources and power to stop dodgy operators.
- Work with unions to develop and introduce adequate protection for workers speaking up about workplace conditions, including whistleblower laws.
- Ensure that government boards and decision-making forums include union nominated representatives, especially those pertaining to jobs and workers.
- No further privatisation of public sector work.
- In source public services that have already been outsourced, for better outcomes on jobs, cost, accountability, and quality.



Unions Tasmania is the peak body for workers in our state, bringing our member unions together to campaign and win on the issues that affect working Tasmanians and their families. We are a people powered movement of 50,000 Tasmanians, working in the public and private sector, across every industry and workplace in Tasmania.