

ETU NSW & ACT

LIVEWIRE

SPRING 2020 • OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ELECTRICAL TRADES UNION



**EVOENERGY EBA
PROTECTS JOBS**

+7.2% PAY RISE

ETU

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NSW & ACT BRANCH

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ETU WORKING

TO PROTECT & CREATE JOBS

JUSTIN
SAYS ...

The ETU has stepped up to protect and advance the interests of members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Job security and job creation are key priorities for the ETU in this economic upheaval.

We've worked hard and innovatively with our members, industry and government, to ensure ETU members can keep working safely.

“Our ambitious Combined Power Industry EBA campaign brings together 5,000 ETU members across five electricity companies to fight for common goals.”

The campaign's core demand is job security at companies including Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy, each of which intends to axe hundreds of jobs.

Last year a strong ETU campaign saved 165 jobs at Essential Energy. We must fight just as hard on all fronts.

In construction and contracting, we're calling on both the NSW and Federal Governments to bring forward a massive building program to provide work along with vital infrastructure and facilities.

We welcomed the State Government's announcement that major infrastructure projects will be fast-tracked - however the industry that drives so much of our economy needs much more.

The next level down of the sector needs a huge injection of funding for projects in schools, hospitals and other public facilities. This will require funding planned for future budgets to be urgently brought forward.

In extraordinary times, we need our governments to take extraordinary measures.

In unity

JUSTIN PAGE
SECRETARY ETU NSW & ACT



05

5th ZOOM OFF

COMBINED
POWER INDUSTRY
EBA CAMPAIGN LAUNCH



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WINNERS

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ELECTRICITY SECTOR MEMBERS UNITE FOR COMBINED EBA CAMPAIGN



The Combined Power Industry EBA campaign brings together 5,000 ETU members at five companies to organise around common industry issues.

The campaign was launched in July by senior delegates from Evoenergy, Transgrid, Endeavour Energy, Ausgrid and Essential Energy.

Enterprise bargaining is underway at the first two companies, and scheduled in coming months at the three NSW distributors. But individual company negotiations are overshadowed by external pressures that affect all.

‘Our industry and our union need to address these common industry-wide issues that impact on the bargaining environment at each company,’ said ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page. ‘We are united around the core union demand of job security and in particular no forced redundancies.’

Justin said the recent summer of extreme weather has changed the game when it comes to staffing. Power companies need to be prepared for more frequent and destructive weather events.’

‘More than 5,000 jobs have been cut since 2014. Those cuts were too deep, exposing companies as under-manned. This left communities without power for weeks longer than necessary.’

Electricity companies, and the NSW Government that part-owns Ausgrid and Endeavour, must ensure distributors

are sufficiently staffed and resourced to maintain a safe and reliable power supply to homes and businesses.

‘Industry superannuation funds Australian Super and IFM (Ausgrid) and REST (Endeavour) have invested millions of dollars of workers’ money into distribution companies,’ said Justin. ‘Those funds, whose boards include workers’ representatives, should support ethical industrial policies including no forced redundancies.’

Justin noted that in 2019 an ETU political campaign saved 165 jobs at Essential Energy.

‘We will fight again to save jobs and services across the distribution sector.’

A survey of all ETU power industry members set the priorities for the Combined Campaign and for EBA bargaining at each company.

‘This is a challenging time to bargain for an enterprise agreement and sector-wide reform. The only way to defend our current conditions and improve job security is to maintain unity and fight collectively,’ said Justin.

6 INDUSTRY-WIDE ISSUES THAT AFFECT ETU MEMBERS ACROSS THE POWER SECTOR

- 1** Deep ongoing cuts to operating expenditure and capital expenditure, imposed by the Australian Energy Regulator, have driven companies to cut jobs and services
- 2** The continuing threat of further privatisation as evidenced by recent statements from NSW government leaders about the ‘need’ for ‘asset recycling’
- 3** The past, ongoing and planned redundancies that have already seen more than 5,000 jobs cut across the sector
- 4** Employment guarantee legislation ended for Ausgrid, Endeavour and Transgrid on 30 June 2020
- 5** The 2019-20 summer of extreme weather when drought, fires, storms and floods destroyed swathes of the power network and exposed electricity companies as under-manned and under-prepared
- 6** The COVID-19 pandemic has created uncertainty for workers, companies and the economy

EVOENERGY
POLE CHANGE CREW,
CANBERRA



MEMBERS AT 5 POWER COMPANIES WILL ACT FOR JOBS

ETU members at five major power companies are prepared to take legal industrial action to defend job security.

That's the key outcome of a wide-ranging ETU survey that asked members what matters most in their next enterprise agreement.

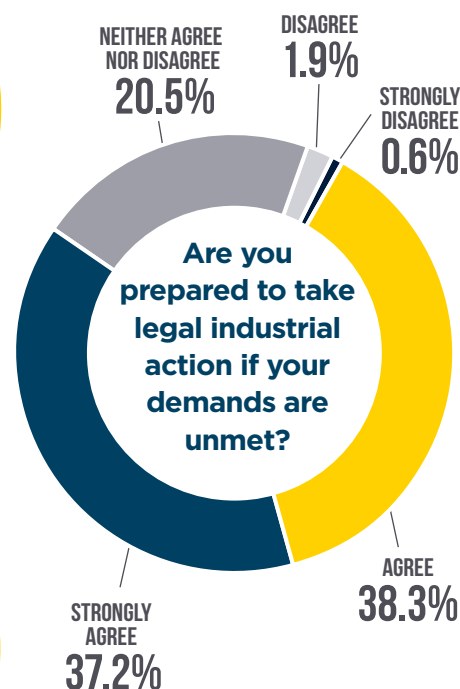
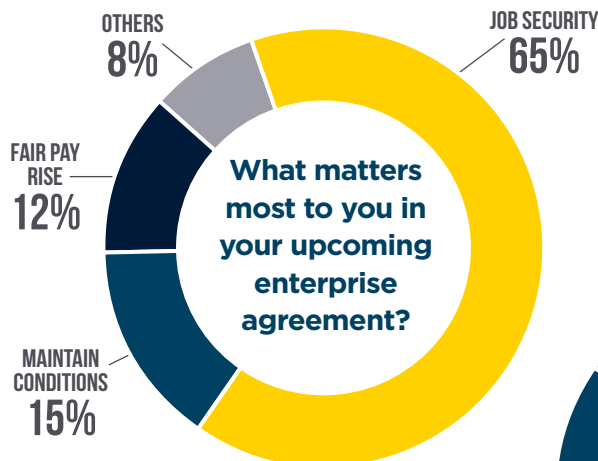
Many members employed by Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy, Essential Energy, Transgrid and Evoenergy responded.

The survey coincided with the launch of the ETU's first Combined Power Industry EBA campaign - bringing together 5,000 members across the electricity sector.

ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page said the campaign launch and survey had drawn 'a tremendous response from our members'.

'We asked members to tell us what matters most and a huge number did. The survey tells us that views are strong and consistent across the five companies.

'Members nominated three key issues: job security, maintaining current conditions and fair pay rises. The ETU will fight for these issues through our combined campaign and in EBA negotiations.



'As our campaign builds momentum, we're already seeing the benefits of building solidarity across companies and across the sector.'

ELECTRICITY SECTOR MEMBERS:

GET INVOLVED IN THE COMBINED POWER INDUSTRY EBA CAMPAIGN.
CONTACT YOUR ETU DELEGATE OR ORGANISER TO FIND OUT MORE





COMBINED POW

EBA CAMPAIGN STEERING

The Combined Power Industry EBA Campaign is guided by a Steering Co

TRANSGRID

A UNITED FRONT



'In these uncertain times, it's vitally important that the ETU brings together delegates from the combined power industry. Employers are exploiting the concerns around COVID-19 by offering minimal pay increases and erosion of conditions. By building a united front, the ETU will ensure that members achieve the best outcomes and stem the job losses that the industry has been subject to due to privatisation and unrealistic funding determinations by the regulator.'

Paul O'Malley, BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYST

REWARD OUR SKILLS

'If a combined campaign results in better wages and conditions, and more secure employment, that's a good thing. ETU members at all the companies involved are highly-trained technicians and tradespeople - we should all be rewarded accordingly. Transgrid used COVID as an excuse to offer us a rollover with CPI-linked pay, effectively a wage freeze.'

Michael McManus, CONSTRUCTION SITE MANAGER



ESSENTIAL ENERGY

PARITY OF CONDITIONS



'The combined campaign is a great idea, working together and bouncing ideas off each other. It could be very beneficial for Essential Energy members because we're a little behind on some pay rates and conditions. We should work together to get parity on conditions across the sector. We've seen a lot of redundancies and depot closures, but it was great to see the ETU campaign and save jobs in 2019. We need to keep on it!'

Brad Willis, LIVE LINEWORKER

WE WORK TOGETHER

'We've worked together after storms and fire damaged the network. We've seen the different conditions. For us at Essential, we want to get parity with Ausgrid and Endeavour, on wages, conditions and job security. The companies cut so many jobs that now it takes days or weeks to re-connect power. It used to be done within hours.'

Billy Holm, ASP INVESTIGATOR/TRANSMISSIONING SPECIALIST



EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES

'A combined campaign means everyone contributes and fights together. United we stand, divided we beg! ETU members have supplied power under unprecedented circumstances - overcoming privatisation, staffing cuts and extreme weather. Our top issues at Transgrid are: job security, fair recompense for a fair day's work and no loss of conditions.'

Col Waring, SUBSTATION ADVISOR



NO FORCED REDUNDANCIES

'If we all stick together, it should work out better for everybody. A combined campaign will dispel a few myths and enable clarity on what conditions everyone has got. Essential should be actively exploring options for contestable work, for instance in meter installation, where people can wait weeks in the regions. No forced redundancies is our priority. No-one feels like they've got job security.'

Marty McAuliffe, SENIOR ENGINEERING OFFICER



ER INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

Committee of senior delegates from five companies.

AUSGRID

STAY STRONG TOGETHER



'We have a lot in common. If we can build a bit more unity we can stay strong together. Job security is number one at Ausgrid. The company wants to contract out field services work, the work we do every day. We have the people, the skills and the machinery and we're keen - we want to keep our jobs!'

Jason Dallen, LIVE LINEWORKER

FIGHT FOR COMMON VALUES

'It's great to fight for common interests on a common front. Each company will know they are dealing with the whole industry united around a set of values. The combined campaign let's members see what we are fighting for across the sector. At Ausgrid, the CCR has been an absolute failure since its introduction - we need to go back to a skills-based system.'

Luke Sheridan, LINEWORKER

JOB SECURITY #1

'The combined campaign allows the union to formulate the most effective political and industrial plan and to strategise similar goals in negotiations. Job security is the number one issue at Ausgrid, especially now that contracting out has come to the fore again. We also need to address CCR, the company's unworkable classification/promotion system.'

Peter Kramel, ENGINEERING OFFICER

ENDEAVOUR ENERGY

WE'RE INDUSTRY VOICE

'There is strength in numbers! It's really important that we stand together and support each other. We need to speak as an industry voice, and apply collective pressure on job security and other issues like apprentices. There are currently no apprentices at Endeavour Energy.'

Ellen McNally, FAULTS & EMERGENCY OPERATOR



EVOENERGY

SHARE EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE

'It's a great opportunity to share experience and knowledge. I've been a delegate for several years but not a negotiator - now I have a network to reach out to. All the utilities are cost-cutting, but they are attacking workers. We are the ones who keep the network running. At Evoenergy, we had to be strong and united to force management to genuinely negotiate.'

Tara Wiggins, ACCREDITATION OFFICER



COMMON CHALLENGES & GOALS

'The Combined EBA campaign makes sense because we all share common goals: maintaining conditions, getting a fair pay rise and job security. We also face similar challenges, such as the deep AER cuts to budgets which have impacted jobs. At Evoenergy, EBA negotiations have got people talking about their conditions again.'

Peter Brewer, PROTECTION TECHNICIAN



BUILDING UNITY

'Being in Canberra, we can feel a bit removed from the NSW companies. It's good to get all members involved and informed. We can take the discussions from the Steering Committee into our workplaces. Our EBA campaign has built more unity at Evoenergy. We ran a good drive for a 'No' vote on the poor offer the company put out.'

Shane O'Loughlin, LINEWORKER



ETU FIGHTS AUSGRID PLAN

TO REPLACE PERMANENT STAFF WITH CONTRACTORS

Ausgrid's plan to massively increase the scope and scale of contracting out has met with fierce opposition from the overwhelming majority of employees.

The company revealed in June the proposed contracting out of core end-to-end line work from design to construction and switching.

If such drastic changes proceed, Ausgrid could steadily replace its permanently employed workforce with insecure contractors on vastly inferior conditions.

The distributor intends to axe 500 jobs in 2021 and 2022, on top of more than 2,000 positions cut since 2015.

The ETU has pushed back strongly against the company's proposal, lodging a dispute under the terms of the Ausgrid Enterprise Agreement.

Ausgrid failed to complete several clear processes required under the EBA before any move to outsource work,' said ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page.

The company did not genuinely provide all relevant information about the proposed changes, the effects of those changes on employees, and measures to mitigate the adverse affects on employees.

Ausgrid also failed to explore all internal options to use its existing workforce to perform work that is proposed to be contracted out. This is despite data showing internal inefficiencies of up to 20 per cent.

'We are deeply concerned about the company's failure to communicate the contracting out proposal to employees,' said Justin. 'Our ETU survey revealed that 32 per cent, or one-in-three, Ausgrid workers are not aware of the outsourcing plan.'

As Livewire went to print, the dispute remained unresolved and the ETU continues to oppose this proposal.

The union has also raised the contracting out plan with senior representatives of IFM and AustralianSuper, the superannuation funds that majority-own Ausgrid.

'These industry super funds are built on workers' money. ETU members, and the members of all industry funds, rightly expect our super funds to invest and operate with integrity and to treat working people with respect,' said Justin Page.

'I have made it clear to the representatives of IFM and AustralianSuper that Ausgrid's plan to contract out core end-to-end work, while preparing to cut 500 further jobs, does not align with the values we expect industry funds should uphold.'

MEMBERS OVERWHELMINGLY REJECT AUSGRID OUTSOURCING PROPOSAL

The ETU surveyed members about Ausgrid's plan to massively increase the scope and scale of contracting out. The results were clear and overwhelming.

- ➔ **94%** of Ausgrid employees oppose the company's proposal, with 80% strongly opposed
- ➔ **97%** of respondents said Ausgrid should use existing employees first, rather than bring in new contractors
- ➔ **94%** said the super funds that majority-own Ausgrid should stop the planned 500 job cuts
- ➔ **95%** said the NSW Government, which part-owns Ausgrid, should stop the company's proposal for massive contracting out
- ➔ **95%** of members confirmed support for the ETU's campaign to protect job security, with 80% in strong support





AUSGRID: 81% OF MEMBERS PREPARED TO ACT FOR FAIR EBA

ETU members at Ausgrid have nominated four key priorities in upcoming EBA negotiations: job security, maintaining current conditions, a fair pay rise and fixing CCR.

Job security emerged as the clear leading issue, according to 81 per cent of respondents to an ETU survey. No loss of conditions matters most to 17 per cent, while a fair pay rise comes first for 8 per cent.

ETU members are also determined to see the failed CCR classification/promotion system reformed or replaced.

Negotiations for the next Ausgrid agreement are likely to commence around October. The current three-year EBA expires in January 2021.

ETU organiser Darran Miller said members are set to mount a

determined EBA campaign, despite the technical challenges posed by the pandemic.

‘We’ve learned a lot about organising remotely over the past few months. Those lessons will help us work together effectively to achieve the goals set by our Ausgrid members.’

More than 80% of Ausgrid employees are prepared to take legal industrial action to get a fair EBA, the ETU survey found. Fewer than 3 per cent oppose action, with 16 per cent neutral. Any such action would be preceded by a Protected Action Ballot of all union members.

‘Those are compelling numbers before negotiations have even begun. The survey results confirm our members are powerfully united around our demand for job security.’

Darran called for Ausgrid delegates and active members to volunteer to join the ETU negotiating committee.

Our union is only as strong as our active members. Get on board and help achieve a fair EBA outcome.

ENDEAVOUR ENERGY: STANDING STRONG FOR JOB SECURITY

Endeavour Energy members will stand strong for job security in EBA negotiations set to start in September.

Asked to rate their top three EBA issues, Endeavour Energy members nominated job security (70 per cent), a fair pay rise (14%) and maintaining current conditions (10 per cent).

The current agreement expires in December 2020. Management has already announced the intention to cut 300 jobs by 2024. The company launched a restructure that commenced with management grades and is now focused on administration, operations and field staff.

However, during a separate Interest-Based Bargaining process, the Endeavour Board committed to no forced redundancies before 30 June, 2021. Job guarantees that prevented forced redundancies expired in June 2020.

The ETU welcomed the Board’s commitment as ‘a good start’ but confirmed that, once EBA bargaining starts, the union will push for no forced redundancies for the life of the agreement.

The company can expect a vigorous EBA campaign with more than two-thirds of Endeavour Energy employees prepared to take legal industrial action to achieve a fair EBA.



67 PER CENT OF MEMBERS RESPONDING TO AN ETU SURVEY AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE THEY ARE READY TO TAKE ACTION.

TRANSGRID TALKS STALL AFTER TWO POOR PAY OFFERS

Transgrid EBA negotiations were at an impasse, at the time of writing, after the company made two sub-standard offers that were rejected by senior union delegates.

The current agreement does not expire until 1 December, 2020, however management approached the ETU requesting early negotiations. Transgrid claimed an early agreement, settled by July, would deliver certainty to all parties and security to workers.

Since then Transgrid has made concessions. An improved job security clause falls short of ETU demands for 'no forced redundancies', but does require the company to exhaust voluntary redundancies first. 'Susso' rates, or Living Away From Home allowance, will increase significantly.

Transgrid has agreed to maintain most current conditions, but the company seeks to cut Saturday overtime pay and switch from weekly to fortnightly pay.

It is the company's failure to make a genuine pay offer that has killed any chance of an agreement so far.

Transgrid first offered a CPI-based wage increase - effectively a zero pay rise because Australian CPI is in negative territory. In August the company upped the offer to 0.5, 0.75 and 1 per cent - a total of just 2.25 per cent over three years. Both offers were unanimously rejected by the negotiating committee of senior ETU delegates and officials.

ETU organiser Anthony O'Sullivan said workers are standing firm for the fair pay rise that the company can clearly afford.

'Transgrid is in an excellent financial position with more than \$6 billion worth of work in the pipeline. The pandemic has had minimal impact on revenue.

'Management needs to significantly improve the offer or there will be no early agreement and most likely an industrial campaign for a fair pay rise.'

ESSENTIAL ENERGY DELEGATES BUILD STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Essential Energy's EBA does not expire until June 2021, but ETU delegates and organisers are already laying strong foundations.

'We are working with delegates to ensure we have accurate contact details so we can communicate effectively with every Essential Energy member,' said organiser Matt McCann.

'Our delegates will run a comprehensive recruiting campaign over the next few months to ensure we are in the strongest possible negotiating position from day one. 'From October, we'll be meeting via Zoom with delegates and ETU Secretary Justin Page to hammer out the key issues. Over the past few months, we've gained a lot of experience meeting online. I'm confident it will work for us.'

Almost two-thirds of Essential Energy employees responding to an ETU survey nominated 'job security' as the top EBA priority, with maintaining current conditions and a fair pay rise also highly rated.

'An ETU campaign saved 165 jobs in 2019, but management is still openly talking about axing 500 positions,' said Matt McCann. 'Regional NSW can't sustain any more job losses. We will push strongly for a no forced redundancy clause in the next agreement.'

'The recent Evoenergy agreement, which includes pay rises of 7.2 per cent over three years, shows what can be achieved when unionised workers are strongly active in an EBA campaign.'

On-call rates, reducing contractor use, defined benefit superannuation and commitment to apprentices were other issues raised in the survey.

'Essential's on-call rates are well below industry standard. That needs to change. A reduction in contractor use goes hand-in-hand with job security,' said Matt.

The ETU's Combined Power Industry EBA campaign covers members at five companies. Essential Energy is scheduled to be the last of these to settle an agreement. However the major issues are similar across the sector and require industry-wide solutions.

A key factor in the loss of thousands of jobs and the decline of service quality is continuing budget cuts driven by the Australian Energy Regulator.

Essential Energy stands out in one key aspect - the company is 100 per cent publicly-owned, unlike Transgrid (privatised) and Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy (part-privatised).

Essential is also a major regional employer.

These factors provide potential leverage for ETU members fighting against further job losses.





EVOENERGY EBA PROTECTS JOBS

+7.2% PAY RISE

ETU members at **Evoenergy** have secured a **7.25 per cent pay rise** after sticking together in a strong EBA campaign.

The wage rises are included in a new three-year EBA that maintains current conditions.

Workers have been backpaid the first instalment of 2 per cent, with increases of 2.5 and 2.75 per cent due in July 2021 and 2022.

Job security is protected, with Evoenergy not planning redundancies during the life of the agreement.

ETU delegate Shane O'Loughlin said the outcome is 'a bloody good deal in tough economic times'.

The turning point in the campaign came in July, when 77 per cent of employees voted to reject the company's first offer. The ETU campaigned strongly for a 'no' vote.

'We got this good result off the back of solidarity expressed through that overwhelming no vote,' said Shane.

ETU organiser Matt McCann said the company initially offered a much

lower pay rise and planned to cut several conditions.

'We got on the front foot with good communications that countered management's roadshow. Our delegates did a fantastic job.'

Around 350 Evoenergy employees receive the pay rises, which flow to 300 workers at the Actew-AGL retail arm.

'Having a strong union at Evoenergy also benefited the mainly non-union workers in retail,' said Matt.

The outcome at the Canberra electricity distributor sets a benchmark for EBAs across the sector.



ETU ACTION

SAFework ORDERS LENDLEASE TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM DEADLY ASBESTOS

SafeWork NSW has issued Lendlease with an Improvement Notice after an ETU inspection found asbestos on the M4-M5 Link.

SafeWork confirmed that 'workers may be exposed ... to inhalation of asbestos fibres'.

The asbestos exposed may be friable - the mineral's deadliest form - rather than bonded, SafeWork found.

The Notice directs builder Lendlease to 'manage risks associated with asbestos fibres' and 'review control measures'.

The regulator took action after ETU officials documented contaminated soil. Concerned workers had called the union in.



'We welcome this action from Safework which requires Lendlease to protect workers from deadly asbestos,' said ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page.

'The ETU continues to monitor safety on this project and across the construction sector.'

Stage one of the \$3.2 billion WestConnex M4-M5 Link will deliver two 7.5 kilometre tunnels linking St Peters and Haberfield. The project is a joint venture between Lendlease Engineering, Samsung C&T and Bouygues Construction.

ETU REPORTS DODGY JOB ADS

Electrical TA's - Switchboards and Panel Wiring

Adecco

More jobs from this company

4 Aug 2020 Sydney, NSW Contract/Trades & S

Workfast - Sydney NSW

\$33 - \$33 an hour

20 days ago, from Backpacker Job Board

In Summary

Our client Workfast are looking for Electrical Trade Assistants or Qualified Electricians to join their Electrical team on a construction site in the rate of pay is \$32.75 per hour. The electrical work will involve and installation works and working on Building Management Systems great location in Parramatta - opposite the station so easily accessible Sydney.

The ETU has called on regulators to stop contractors advertising for non-qualified workers to perform electrical work.

Justin Page, Secretary ETU NSW & ACT Branch, said such ads breach NSW laws and regulations governing electrical work.

'I wrote to SafeWork NSW and Fair Trading drawing attention to a number of ads sent to the union by our members.

'Employers are blatantly advertising for unlicensed people to perform electrical work. These contractors are putting workers and the public in serious danger!'

REPORT DODGY JOB ADS TO THE ETU:

ETUFEEDBACK@ETUNSW.COM.AU

UNION PROUD

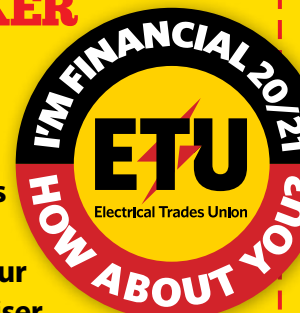


ETU members employed by contractor Fredon at Dawes Point Arts Precinct, with organisers Antony Stegic and Laurie Duff

NEW ETU 'I'M FINANCIAL' STICKER

A proud tribute to our Indigenous members.

Contact your ETU organiser to get yours



ETU INCOME PROTECTION HELPS APPRENTICE SEVERELY INJURED IN SCRUM

ETU income protection has delivered ongoing financial relief to a young apprentice who suffered shocking injuries playing football.

Daniel Solofa's ETU membership and union EBA entitled him to Chifley Income Protection.

The Chifley financial product is a standard feature of ETU construction EBAs. Eligible members can claim up to 90% of their regular income (to a maximum of \$2,000 weekly under the new EBAs) for up to two years.

To find out more, visit www.chifleyservices.com.au, email info@chifleyservices.com.au or call 1800 800 002.

DANIEL SOLOFA
WITH PARTNER ELLEN.



YOUNG ELECTRICIAN SUFFERS CARDIAC ARREST AFTER HV ELECTRIC SHOCK

SafeWork NSW issued a stern warning to contractors after a 24-year-old electrician went into cardiac arrest from a severe high-voltage electric shock.

Co-workers used a defibrillator (AED) to revive the worker before he was rushed to emergency with burns after the incident at Eastern Creek Data Centre.

SafeWork said the electrician 'received a potentially fatal electric shock while testing a transformer. He contacted exposed conductors as voltages were applied to the transformer'.

The regulator emphasised that only licensed electricians with appropriate training should perform electrical work.

The ETU was closely involved with the investigation, ensuring members on the Eastern Creek location are safe and supported.

'We believe a key issue behind this life-threatening incident was inadequate training on the equipment electricians were required to use,' said ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page.

UNION ACTION

SECURES SUBSTANTIAL PAYMENT FOR UNFAIRLY SACKED APPRENTICE

ETU action has secured a substantial financial settlement for a second-year apprentice who was unfairly dismissed by an electrical contractor. The company also agreed to withdraw its termination of the ETU member, who was able to officially resign from the job.

These outcomes were achieved by the ETU during conciliation in the Fair Work Commission. The 18-year-old was sacked in a phone call, for reasons we cannot report but which are heavily disputed.

'I was in shock. I couldn't believe it until an email arrived. Then I contacted the ETU,' said the young worker. Within days, the ETU team was on the case. When the union took the matter to Fair Work, the company agreed to settle.

'Thank you, ETU! Without the union, I would have got nothing,' said the apprentice. 'I had a great experience and a good outcome with the union. It's certainly worth the \$3 per week I pay in fees!'

NORTHCONNEX: 1,000+ FAULTY RCDS REPLACED AFTER ETU ACTION

The non-compliant RCDs caused at least one emergency lighting fire and could have left the entire tunnel without lighting.

Members reported the fire to ETU organiser Lawrie Duff who notified regulators SafeWork and Fair Trading NSW.

NorthConnex builder Lendlease eventually engaged 50 electrical workers to rectify the defects.



IS YOUR SITE UNSAFE?

CONTACT THE ETU TEAM FOR SUPPORT

FAIR WORK BANS

DANGEROUS SYDNEY TRAINS SWITCHING PROCESS

AFTER LONG ETU CAMPAIGN



ANTHONY O'SULLIVAN
ETU
ORGANISER

JUSTIN PAGE
ETU NSW & ACT
SECRETARY

ADAM JACKA
ETU SENIOR
INDUSTRIAL
OFFICER

The Fair Work Commission has prevented Sydney Trains from trialling a new, partially automated switching process because the procedure does not protect the health, safety and welfare of employees.

The Decision handed down on 31 July brings to an end years of disputes and legal battles as the company sought repeatedly to introduce the change, which would have seen the 1500 volt mains earthed before fully isolating.

ETU member Ken Owen, an Electrical Systems Operator, first raised the alarm in 2015 after attending a briefing on the proposed new switching system. Ken viewed the planned trial as so dangerous he lodged a dispute under the terms of the Sydney Trains enterprise agreement.

ETU delegate Chris Newton, an Electrical Systems Supervisor, later joined the fight and worked with other ETU members to lodge two further disputes.

The issue escalated to Fair Work in 2019, where Commissioner McKenna found in favour of the ETU case that the new procedure should be banned on safety grounds. Sydney Trains appealed that Decision and in February 2020 the Full Bench referred a central question back to Commissioner McKenna for determination:

'Can Sydney Trains lawfully and reasonably direct relevant Electrical Systems Supervisors and Electrical System Operators to perform work in connection with the trial of the proposed sequential switching procedure having regard to its obligation under clause 35.2 of the Sydney Trains Enterprise Agreement 2018? (that the employer must ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all of its employees).'

Sydney Trains did not deny, and the company's own experts confirmed, that the proposed new procedure would introduce two new risks, and was therefore less safe than the existing procedure. A workplace accident could leave victims with severe burns.

After reviewing the evidence, Commissioner McKenna concluded 'the proposed field trial cannot ... be conducted in a safe manner'.

The Commissioner found that 'processes proposed to be implemented by employers for efficiency-related reasons

(should not) introduce new or additional risks that could result in catastrophic injury or death at the workplace'.

Therefore, the Commissioner found, 'Sydney Trains cannot lawfully and reasonably direct the ESOs (and ESSs) to perform work in connection with the trial of the proposed sequential switching'.

ETU delegate Chris Newton described the outcome as 'a great win for the ETU team'.

It's very satisfying and exciting that together we were able to stop an unsafe act.

Chris thank ETU senior industrial officer Adam Jacka and organiser Anthony O'Sullivan for 'amazing' support.

'All the long meetings and hard effort - in the end it was worth it'

Chris said the lesson of the case is 'if you find something unsafe, you can stand up for your rights and tell the company it's not safe to work'.

MAINTENANCE WORKERS

DENIED ALLOWANCE & DUMPED IN SUB-STANDARD FACILITIES

Hundreds of Sydney Trains members are working out of dirty sub-standard facilities after depots effectively closed due to the pandemic.

Some network maintenance workers are stuck in shipping containers dumped in parking lots next to a battered portaloo. Others lack hot water, heating, meal rooms, sinks and are unable to social distance due to tiny rooms.

The ETU lodged a dispute in the Fair Work Commission because Sydney Trains refuses to pay the Start & Finish Allowance which is payable under the EBA to some employees required to start/finish outside their depot.

The union is also pushing management to rectify and upgrade the makeshift facilities on health and safety grounds.

Members at GyMEA reported no meal room, shower or running water, and constant noise complaints from neighbours. At multiple sites, members reported no cleaning or sanitisation service provided.

ETU organiser Anthony O'Sullivan called on Sydney Trains to ensure electrical workers have access to basic facilities that meet required health and safety standards.

Our members have gone the extra mile to keep the network running during this pandemic. Management should show respect and duty of care by rectifying these facilities and paying the modest Start & Finish Allowance.



SYDNEY TRAINS

should get real

ABOUT DEDICATED PROTECTION OFFICERS

The ETU has called on Sydney Trains to genuinely consult over the introduction of dedicated protection officers.

Protection officers play a critical role monitoring all safety angles when employees are working on track. However most protection officers are contractors who the ETU believes lack qualifications and experience.

Some of these contractors are casuals with a week's training and no rail background. They have no annual, sick leave or job security, which makes fatigue management difficult, said ETU President Glen Potter.

The Sydney Trains EBA provides for consultation and a trial of dedicated protection officers who could be directly employed or drawn from existing staff.

Following consultation in late-2019, the company advertised internally for dedicated protection officers but received no applications.

'The pay offer for the position was so low that no internal applicants emerged. Management set the process up to fail by offering such a low salary,' said Glen.

'We call on Sydney Trains to genuinely re-engage in consultation, with the aim of finding a realistic path to employ dedicated protection officers.'

'Safety must be paramount when people are working on track. Cutting corners to save a few dollars by employing contractors is unacceptable and could lead to tragedy.'



Union EBAs DELIVER IMPROVED RATES & CONDITIONS at Sydney Water contractors

Electrical workers employed by Sydney Water contractors will be covered by union EBAs that deliver good industry conditions and strong pay rises.

Sydney Water had previously contracted out most electrical services to a single contractor, Ventia. But in 2019 new tenders divided the work contracts into three regions, each awarded to a different company or consortium.

The ETU has negotiated enterprise agreements for each region. The new EBAs maintain and strongly improve the rates and conditions of the old agreements that covered Ventia employees.

Greenfields EBAs apply to the South region, where 'Delivery for Customers', a John Holland/Lendlease joint venture, hold the contract, and West region, where Programmed hold the contract.

These two agreements, negotiated in 2020, deliver a 6% pay rise over three years. ETU members in the South and West regions will gain Income Protection through the ETU's partner Chifley.

The union EBA for North region, negotiated in 2019, covers employees of 'Confluence Water', a Downer EDI/Broadspectrum joint venture. The EBA delivers a 13.2% wage increase between November 2019 and March 2022, boosts allowances and brings in a regional site allowance matrix.

The 10-year contracts, subject to a review after five years, cover design, construction, maintenance and facilities management services.

ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page said: 'The ETU opposed contracting out by Sydney Water, however we've been able to ensure that all electrical workers will enjoy good rates and conditions under union EBAs.'

'We will work with our members to build strong campaigns for the next round of EBAs and achieve further improvements.'

UNION EBA DELIVERS

10% PAY RISE & INCOME PROTECTION FOR TREE TRIMMERS



Around 40 workers at vegetation control company Asplundh received an immediate \$1.50 per hour pay rise after negotiating a union EBA.

The four-year agreement expiring in 2023 will boost wages and allowances by 10%. For the first time, ETU members at the company will be covered for injury or illness outside the workplace under Chifley Income Protection Insurance. Top-Up Workers Compensation cover is included under the Chifley policy. Asplundh holds vegetation control contracts with electricity companies, Sydney Trains and Sydney Water. ETU delegate John Smith said members are 'pretty happy' with the outcome.

'The pay rises keep us ahead of inflation. We kept all our conditions. The Chifley insurance will be handy if anything happens outside of work.'

'Thanks to the ETU and organiser Stewart Edward for going into bat for us. Without the union, we would have got none of it.'

The ETU now has agreements with the three major vegetation control companies: Asplundh, Active Tree Services and Eastern Tree Services. All provide Chifley Income Protection and Top-Up Insurance.

TREE TRIMMERS SNARE 2% PANDEMIC PAY RISE

ETU members working for vegetation management company ETS received a one-off 2% pay rise to carry them through the pandemic.

The increase from July 2020 keeps members' wages ahead of inflation after EBA negotiations were paused due to COVID-19.

'All the boys are quite happy. This maintains the value of our pay until we can get back to bargaining next year,' said ETU delegate Josh Parry, from Coffs Harbour.

ETS hold contracts to manage vegetation around powerlines owned by Essential Energy and other companies. 'It's a great job. All the boys get along and we see different areas along the east coast every day,' said Josh.





VENTIA SPARKIES SNARE 20% PAY RISE

Union solidarity has delivered pay rises of up to 20% for 18 sparkies employed by contractor Ventia.

The highly-skilled electrical workers are 100% union. They were prepared to take industrial action before accepting the employer's third offer.

The ETU members perform high-voltage switching and operating work on a new contract for Sydney Water.

Their new EBA delivers an initial 13.2% pay rise in July 2020, followed by increases of 3% in 2021 and 2022.

ETU organiser Anthony O'Sullivan congratulated members on 'a great united effort'.

'Delegates Luke Powell and Liam Thorpe did a good job signing up everyone to the union and keeping the team together. 'This excellent outcome shows that, even in difficult times, workers can win when we stick together as a strong union.'

DAIRY WORKERS **DEMAND** FAIR PAY RISE

ETU members at dairy giant Lactalis will take industrial action if the company fails to improve an EBA pay offer.

Workers at the Lidcombe plant of the French-owned multinational voted 100% 'YES' in a Protected Action Ballot.

'Our members are determined to achieve their moderate demands: a fair pay rise with no loss of conditions,' said ETU organiser Anthony O'Sullivan.

Lactalis brands include Pauls, Oak, Lemnos and Vaalia.



FAIR WORK TELLS TOMAGO TO PAY PARENTAL LEAVE TO first-time dad

Tomago Aluminium has paid seven weeks parental leave to an ETU member, after initially refusing to accept medical evidence that the father was the primary carer.

The Fair Work Commission recommended the company accept an obstetrician's supporting letter and pay the leave, in line with the company's Parental Leave Policy.

ETU NSW & ACT Secretary Justin Page slammed Tomago for putting the family 'through months of unnecessary and unfair stress'.



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SPACE SPARKIES MEET OVER UNION BBQ



ETU members from two very different employers met over a BBQ lunch served by Canberra organiser Jimmy Darnton-Turner.

The venue was the Deep Space Communication Complex, which is funded by NASA and staffed by the CSIRO - a 100% union site where workers imposed an overtime ban to improve their last EBA.

Also on site were ETU members from Shepherd Electrical, on an upgrade project. Shepherd is a major Canberra contractor whose workers recently won a 10% pay rise and more after joining and organising with the ETU.

'It was nice to bring a great bunch of blokes together to chat about the values we share as ETU members. Both groups have good conditions because they are active and united,' said Jimmy.

CANBERRA MEMBERS: ASK JIMMY TO BRING AN ETU BBQ TO YOUR SITE!

BIG FIRST YEAR FOR ETU WOMEN

The ETU NSW & ACT Branch Women's Committee has notched up some big wins since being established one year ago.

Female membership of the Branch increases every month, even during the pandemic. Women are active on ETU leadership bodies.

Power distributors provide sanitary options after ETU lobbying. 50 women attended the first ETU Women's Information and Training Day.

VALE MARIO PREVITERA 1967-2020

The ETU extends sincere condolences to the family, friends and workmates of Mario Previtera, who passed away aged 53 after a long battle with illness.

Mario worked for 30 years at Essential Energy's Orange depot, where he was an ETU delegate and Resource Supervisor.

He was a respected Orange City Councillor under the banner of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

ETU co-delegate Dion Glaze described Mario Previtera as 'a very humble, quiet character that everyone loved because of his calm manner'.

'Mario was passionate about the ETU and passionate about standing up for ETU members. He believed in the values of safety first, so everyone goes home to their loved ones.'

Dion, an Asset Inspector, said Mario had selected and mentored him as a union co-delegate.

'He had faith in me. I learned so much from his experience and the way he handled situations. Mario would listen to everyone, then put his opinion, and you were happy to meet him halfway.

'As a local councillor, he always had the interests of the community in mind, not his own. He was a very unselfish man. Mario was an all-round good bloke with old-school values.'

Mario grew up in a close Italian family and, until his passing, lived with his brother on the family orchard.



FEMALE MEMBERS:

FIND OUT MORE, GET INVOLVED. EMAIL ETUWOMENSOFFICER@ETUNSW.COM.AU



ETU
ORGANISER
MATT
McCANN

4% PAY BOOST @ CANBERRA'S ICON WATER

Union members at Icon water in the ACT have narrowly voted up an enterprise agreement that delivers a 4% pay rise over two years.

The EBA maintains all current conditions. Allowances increase by 4% effective immediately.

The same outcome was narrowly voted down by employees in July. Management ran a six-week campaign that shifted a handful of votes and saw the EBA approved.

'We didn't get everything we wanted, but this is still a good outcome for our members,' said ETU organiser Matt McCann.

'It means real wage increases ahead of inflation which is handy in the current environment. Our delegates can hold their heads high. They did a great job in difficult times.'

ETU
ORGANISER
NICK
BLIGH



M4-M5 LINK PROJECT TO HIRE 7 APPRENTICES

AFTER ETU ACTION

The M4-M5 Link project has agreed to hire seven third-year apprentices after the ETU repeatedly raised the issue.

The \$3.2 billion joint venture advertised the positions following representations from ETU organiser Nick Bligh.

Nick had slammed management for not engaging a single apprentice on one of Sydney's largest government-funded infrastructure projects. During the pandemic, hundreds of apprentices have been stood down or returned to group training organisations.

'It's good to see the project do the right thing and recruit young electrical workers who are the future of our industry,' said Nick. 'The ETU will continue to push for apprentices to be hired across major projects.'

MEATWORKS MAINTENANCE WORKERS VOTING ON WAGE DEAL

Maintenance workers at the Casino meatworks were considering an EBA offer, as Livewire went to print.

The Northern Co-operative Meat Company (NCMC) members were voting on a new wages table that would deliver pay rises of between 14% and 6.8% over four years. ETU delegate Scott Kemp said members would maintain all current conditions.

'The company is in good shape after expanding its domestic sales in recent times.'



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Special spring offer on top quality ETU hoodies, originally priced at \$40.

Available for delivery or pick up at the ETU office.



THE LINESMAN

Former lineworker and ETU member **Arthur Rutter** has written and published a fascinating short book based on his experiences working at a Prospect Country Council (later Integral Energy) depot between 1966-81. **'THE LINESMAN'** includes sketches of depot life from a co-worker.



To purchase the book for \$15 plus \$5 postage, email Arthur arthurrutter@hotmail.com



Shop online <https://etu-nsw-merchandise.myshopify.com/>



ETU DELEGATE
PETER KINDRED
WITH MEMBER
ANDREW
KNEESHAW

DOWNER RAIL WORKERS

WIN 14.25% PLUS \$40 PER WEEK ELA

ETU members employer by Downer in rail maintenance won a 14.25% pay rise plus 40 per week Electrical License Allowance.

The significant gains are included in a four-year enterprise agreement covering around 30 ETU members at Auburn Rail Maintenance Centre. The EBA was settled days before the COVID-19 pandemic reached Australia.

ETU delegate Peter Kindred said management improved the offer after weeks of industrial action including overtime bans.

'It was a big win for us and excellent timing to get it done before the pandemic hit. We've already seen solid increases to our pay packets with more to come.'

The Auburn plant maintains Sydney Trains Waratah and Millenium rolling stock.

KONE LIFT WORKERS LAUNCH EBA CAMPAIGN

Workers at lift company Kone have launched an EBA campaign aiming for fair pay rises and improved conditions.

ETU and AMWU members at the multinational company achieved industry-leading outcomes in 2017 after five weeks of rolling industrial action.

Kone delegates supported by ETU organiser Steve Bankes have developed a log of claims which will be lodged with management. Negotiations for a new agreement open next week.

BARGAINING BRIEFS

2% Pay Rise & Rollover at Tomago

ETU members at Tomago Aluminium have secured a 2% pay rise in a 12-month agreement that maintains all current conditions.

'It's a good outcome given the current environment with the pandemic,' said senior union delegate Mitch Harding. 'When negotiations re-open next year, we will continue to staunchly defend all our conditions.'

2.5% more for Koppers members

ETU members at Koppers have voted to accept a 2.5% pay rise in a rollover agreement that maintains all conditions. The multinational company makes chemicals and treated timber products.

ACTION LIKELY

as sugar mill talks turn sour

Workers at three Sunshine Sugar sites in northern NSW are heading towards industrial action after the company failed to offer a pay rise.

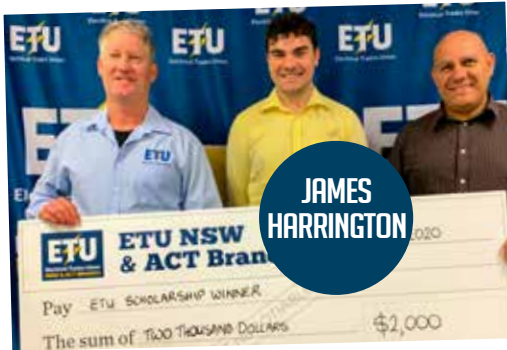
Negotiations for an EBA covering hundreds of workers including 20 ETU members have stalled, with a Protected Action Ballot the likely next step for combined unions.



2020

ETU EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year, the ETU NSW & ACT Branch awards six Education Scholarships to members, their children or grandchildren, for study in further education.



ETU SCHOLARSHIP FOR TOM'S MEDICAL MISSION

Veteran rail electrician Brian Harrington is 'very proud' of his son Tom who has received a 2020 ETU Education Scholarship to support his medical degree.

'Tom is smart but he works very hard,' said Brian, a 35-year ETU member based at Sydney Trains Flemington Maintenance Depot. The younger Harrington faces seven years of study to complete a Bachelor of Science followed by a Doctor of Medicine at Sydney University.

'My goal is to do humanitarian work in regional and remote areas where medical professionals are under-represented,' said Tom.

In 2019 Tom was elected an Indigenous officer on the University of Sydney Union. He is from the Bundjalung people, hailing from the Grafton region, on his father's side.

After losing a job and internship due to the pandemic, Tom said the \$2,000 ETU Scholarship came as 'a huge financial relief'. 'I was surprised and excited to get it. Thank you, ETU!'



ETU BACKS CLAYTON'S STUDY FOR NEW ROLE

Lift installer and ETU delegate Clayton Johnson was 20 years old when his mother sat down to share the family's Indigenous heritage.

'Mum revealed that my great-grandmother Dorothy White, who I remember meeting when I was a young boy, had been stolen and taken to a mission. I am descended from her and the Gundungarra people, whose country is the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands.'

Last year Clayton approached his employer, Schindler lifts, to propose a new role for himself: Indigenous Liaison officer.

'I want to help the company hire skilled Indigenous tradespeople, give them the chance to work for a major company, on a union EBA, with good career prospects.'

Schindler agreed and this year Clayton hopes to have the first recruits on board.

To build new skills for the role, Clayton enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Indigenous Studies, at Macquarie University. A \$2,000 ETU Education Scholarship will help offset the course costs.

'The Scholarship is fantastic. I've been a very active and proud ETU member for the past couple of years.'

ABBAS UPSKILLS WITH ETU HELPING HAND

Abbas Saffar has always been able to find work – including on iconic infrastructure projects NorthConnex, the M5 and Sydney Metro.

But the pandemic slowdown has seen plans stalled and fewer jobs available.

'It's been harder to get a start,' said the electrician, with a young family and mortgage taken on just before COVID-19 arrived.

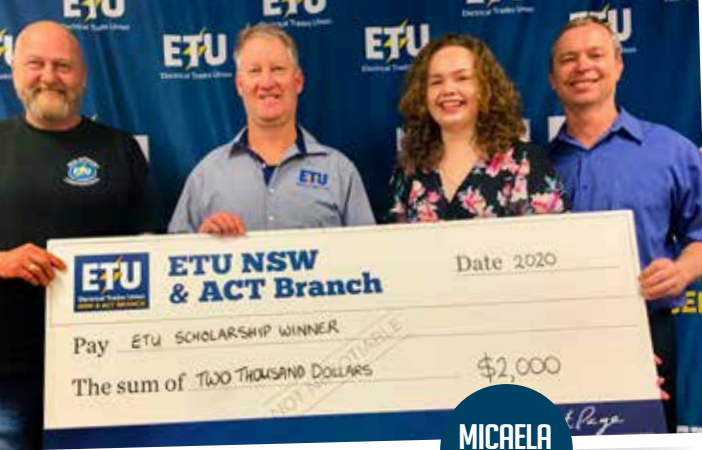
Abbas decided to upskill to improve his chances in the tighter market. He enrolled in Electrical Instrumentation courses Cert III and Cert IV.

A \$2,000 ETU Education Scholarship will support this loyal and active union member through his studies.

'I've been an ETU member since the first day I started in this industry. It's great to know my union is there for me when times are tough.'

ABBAS SAFFAR





MICAELA PRICE

MICAELA THIRD TIME LUCKY FOR ETU SCHOLARSHIP

Micaela Price has wanted to be a teacher since she was five years old.

That lifelong goal will be a little easier to achieve, thanks to the support of a \$2,000 ETU Education Scholarship.

'We're very happy for Micaela,' said proud dad and long-time ETU member Andy Price, who works for BGIS Technical Services maintaining fire alarm systems.

It's third time lucky for the Western Sydney University student who previously applied for the union Scholarship in 2018 and 2019.

Micaela is part-way through an accelerated Masters of Teaching: Secondary, after completing a Bachelor of Arts.

'Thank you so much, ETU! This will make a huge difference helping with textbooks and course fees,' Micaela said.



ETU NSW & ACT Branch

Pay ETU SCHOLARSHIP WINNER
The sum of TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS

Date 2020

\$2,000



JAMES WOOD

SCHOLARSHIP SHELTERS JAMES FROM PANDEMIC HIT

James Wood thought he was well prepared to support himself through university - and then the pandemic hit.

The son of Armidale Essential Energy delegate Damian Wood worked and saved for a year before moving to Newcastle to study a Bachelor of Secondary Education.

'Within weeks, COVID-19 arrived and work was impossible to find. I began to worry about paying my rent and putting food on the table.'

A \$2,000 ETU Education Scholarship will help James, who plans to teach mathematics at a regional high school, cover the basics.

Father Damian said James would be the first in the family to complete university.

'We were elated to get the Scholarship. We're a single-income family, so for James to go to Newcastle is a significant cost. This money has really helped him.'

UNION SUPPORT HELPS CONNOR MAKE HISTORY

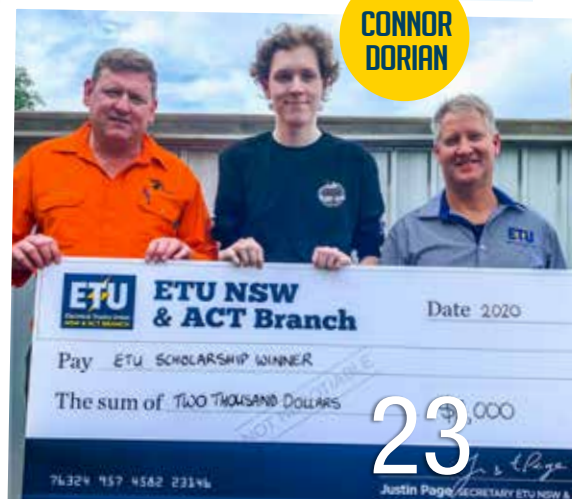
Connor Dorian graduated from high school the hard way. He was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease and forced to take six months off.

The disruption meant he had to take an \$8,000 bridging course to get the grades required for a Bachelor of Arts at Macquarie University, majoring in Ancient History.

Crohn's Disease can be a chronic condition, but Connor is determined to teach history or work in a museum.

Dad Tim Dorrian, an Ausgrid field supervisor, thanked the ETU for awarding Connor a \$2,000 Education Scholarship to help offset the costs faced by the family.

'It's a great scheme. It shows the union cares about our kids and families. It's just so good for Connor to have a positive like this.'



CONNOR DORIAN

ETU NSW & ACT Branch

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