

WORKERS AT MELTON HAVE A CHOICE: SINGLE EA OR JOIN THE METRO MULTI-EMPLOYER AGREEMENT?

Background

Workers at Greater Dandenong, Darebin, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Merri-bek and Yarra have secured the largest worker-led authorisation to pursue multi-employer bargaining in Australia.

This is the best opportunity to significantly improve pay and conditions for local government workers.

Now workers at Melton, Frankston, Knox, Wyndham and Whittlesea have a choice: either bargain for a single EA or join with 10,000+ workers from 8 other councils who are fighting for historic improvements to pay through a new multi-employer agreement.

Single EA outcomes

The system of single EA bargaining has failed local government workers. Employers have manipulated this system to delay and undermine negotiations, refuse to negotiate constructively, divide workers, and hold your wages back.

This system has seen workers lose conditions and suffer declining real wages for the past decade.

What are the benefits of Multi-Employer Bargaining?

Real Power for Workers

Unlike single EAs, under multi-employer bargaining employers cannot easily put an agreement out to a vote without the agreement of the union. This removes the primary tactic that employers use to undermine negotiations and hold wages back. This system will give workers more power, force employers to negotiate constructively, and protect your working conditions.

Unite and Fight as an Industry

Multi-employer bargaining gives local government workers our first ever opportunity to unite as an industry and use our collective power to fight for improvements to pay and working conditions. Our Metro MEB will already cover approximately 10,000 local government workers!

Historic pay rise – Fix Local Government Funding

The Victorian Government's rate cap has constrained wages and starved councils of essential funding. Through the MEB we are fighting to recover from the recent decline in real wage growth (with a "catch up" payment of 10%) and pressure the state government to ensure local government services are properly funded.

What will the Metro MEA look like for workers?

ASU members involved in the metro multi-employer agreement bargaining are fighting for:

- **Pay rises of 10%/4%/4%/4%** or \$ increase + backpay;
- Improvements to conditions including OH&S, Dispute Resolution, Discipline, Replacement of vacancies, Parental Leave, Reproductive Health, and others; and
- All existing terms and conditions (i.e.. your current EA) to be locked in and protected.

Joining the multi-employer agreement will mean that you protect your existing working conditions, whilst gaining the benefit of pay rises and any other improvements that are won in the Metro MEA. It also builds the collective strength of local government workers to continue fighting for improvements in future agreements.

How do we enter the Metro MEA?

As the Metropolitan Multi-Employer Agreement is currently being negotiated (the Authorisation was granted by the Fair Work Commission on 22 December 2025 and the first formal bargaining meeting was on 24 March) there are essentially two legal pathways to join:

1. A council can join the Authorisation and participate in the bargaining for the agreement; or
2. A council can join the Agreement once it has been finalised and approved by the Fair Work Commission.

However, in order to access the multi-employer system, first your current enterprise agreement must have expired (after 30 June 2026), and - if your employer does not consent - then we must establish the support of the statutory majority of employees, as outlined above.

As Melton City Council has initiated bargaining for a single EA, and has not agreed to ballot employees to determine whether to join the multi-employer agreement or proceed with a single EA, our first hurdle is to establish that the majority of workers at Melton City Council wish to join with 10,000+ other local government workers across metropolitan Melbourne, by way of a confidential petition.

We will have further discussions with delegates and members about their options at the conclusion of the petition. If workers are to be "roped in" to a finalised agreement, then workers at Melton will have a chance to view the finalised document - to understand exactly what pay rises and terms and conditions of employment would apply to you - before taking a final vote about whether to join that Agreement.

How is the wage claim going to be funded?

Councils and MAV have been lobbying the state government for a decade to address the impact of rate capping on the financial state of councils, to no avail. The ASU sees a real opportunity in the multi bargaining system that allows workers to collectively fight for increased wages and improvements to conditions. A fundamental precondition to ASU members achieving the wage outcomes they deserve is the state government addressing the wage decline in local government caused by the rate cap and other underfunded services.

This has been successfully demonstrated by the teachers, nurses, ambulance and health workers unions over many years: when workers unite as a sector, we are more powerful and win better outcomes. While there is a mutual interest for councils in addressing the financial impacts of state government policies that have starved councils of funding and have acted as a wages cap for workers, councils continue to fight the ASU at every step.

ASU members are resolute in seeking to reach an agreement that contains the historic wage increases that local government workers deserve. State government intervention is necessary to assist councils in funding fair wage increases that keep up with the cost of living.

Can workers still make changes to the current EA?

Subject to the answer given above, this would depend on whether you are roping into the Authorisation (and therefore participating in negotiations for the proposed multi-employer agreement) or a finalised agreement. If Melton workers were to rope into the agreement after it has been finalised and certified by the Fair Work Commission, then there would not be an opportunity to negotiate and make changes to the current EA in the same way as single bargaining.

However, if there are really pressing issues to address, Council could still make changes to current arrangements, as agreed with the ASU by way of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) instead.

For further information on multi-employer bargaining scan the QR code:

