

Industrial action looms at Sovereign Hill



During recent mass meetings Sovereign Hill members voiced their frustration at management's continued unwillingness to offer a fair wage increase, improved penalty rates or increasing the minimum call for Aura.

Members at this popular venue are feeling overworked and undervalued and are struggling to recover financially from the deep impacts of COVID.

Members have unanimously voted to take action if negotiations do not progress.

Meanwhile, Sovereign Hill delegate **Zerene Webster** recently was named recipient of the prestigious Athan McCaw Memorial Young Activist of the Year Award. Zerene, a proud Wutyubaluk Woman living and working on Wadawurrung Country in

Ballaarat (Ballarat), is a passionate activist and union delegate.

"I am loud, proud and deadly," she says. "This can intimidate people but it has also gotten me very far in my short career as an activist. I love what I do, I do it not for myself but for the people, with the people, as the people. The inclusion and diversity of our country is something to be celebrated, not feared, and that is why I fight so hard to make sure everyone is seen and heard."

The Athan McCaw Memorial Young Activist of the Year Award is given to a delegate aged 36 years or younger who lives in the Ballaarat Trades Hall region and has demonstrated outstanding service and dedication to their workplace.

A change to your public holiday rights

Employers across all workplaces must now ask workers if they wish to work public holidays and cannot automatically roster or schedule you on, regardless of what agreement or contract is in place, thanks to a landmark new Federal Court ruling.

The judges pointed to the power imbalance between bosses and workers, saying an employer can only require employees to work on a public holiday

if their request is reasonable and the worker's refusal is deemed unreasonable. Whether a direction to work on a public holiday is reasonable, or your refusal to work is unreasonable, will depend on the individual circumstances of the employer and the employee.

Members can contact MEAA Member Central on 1300 65 65 13 if you have any questions or concerns about public holidays.

Around the venues

Pay rise and fair rosters top priorities at MCG

MEAA members who ensure the smooth running of some of the country's biggest sporting and concert events are gearing up to negotiate their next union agreement. Top priorities for the agreement include an adequate pay increase due to the rising cost of living, improvements to the rostering system to allow for more flexibility for employees, and improvements to allowances. This is a real chance for members at the 'G to improve pay and conditions for years to come. MCG members who are yet to have their say are urged to complete this two-minute survey using this QR code.



Marvel Stadium backtracks on underpayments

Members at Marvel Stadium have won backpay for extensive briefings for major events featuring the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Harry Styles. They were originally paid a "training wage" of just 75% of the entry level rate for the briefings, which ran for more than an hour, but won proper payment at their usual wage after raising it through the venue's Joint Consultative Committee union representatives, who refused to back down on the issue.

Moonee Valley members set for back pay and pay rises

MEAA members at Moonee Valley Racing Club have voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new MEAA union agreement that delivered 5.5% backpay from July 2022 (2% for supervisors) and 3% increases in August 2023 and 24. Congratulations to all delegates and members on this great result.

Members working in racetracks should also be aware that Victoria Racing Club negotiations will start soon and keep their eyes peeled for opportunities to contribute.

Customer service and union work go hand-in-hand for Greg

For the last 10 years, MEAA member Greg Rowell has contributed his wealth of customer service experience to Marvel Stadium. As well as creating an enjoyable experience for event attendees and looking after his team of casual staff, Geoff works tirelessly as a union delegate educating workers about their rights under their union agreement and working to improving the stadium's casual pay rate and conditions.

What does your work at Marvel Stadium entail?

I am a Team Leader at Marvel Stadium working mainly in the premium seating and function areas. I have been working at the stadium for 10 years. My role as a Team Leader is to manage staff and customer expectations in the area that I am assigned to. This involves supervising the break schedule for the casual staff; briefing the casual staff; timesheets; maintaining the venue infrastructure in a working condition; liaising with event control on any issues affecting my area including abusive behaviour, excess alcohol consumption or lost children, and monitoring the movement of the patrons. If the casual staff have any issues they cannot manage themselves that issue is also escalated to a Team Leader. It can be a busy role depending on the size of crowd at the venue and the type of crowd that the event attracts.

What do you most enjoy about your job and what do you find most challenging?

I enjoy being able to deliver a professional service to the patrons that attend in the area of my responsibility and importantly create an enjoyable experience for those that attend the events and for the casual staff that I am responsible for. The most challenging thing is being able to meet customer expectations. Marvel Stadium is going



through a period of renovation and refurbishment and over these years the infrastructure offerings have been affected. With renovations nearing an end I look forward to being able to offer the patrons that attend the premium seating area and functions a much better customer experience.

What does your work as a MEAA delegate entail?

Making sure that the customer service cohort is never undervalued. Many of the casual staff are not aware of MEAA and also the fact that a union agreement exists so I enjoy being able to educate and respond to questions and help them understand that there is a union looking after their interests, the benefits of being a member of the union and in particular that there are two union delegates) at the stadium they can contact at any time if they have any concerns.

Is there anything at your workplace or

in your industry you would like to see change or improved?

Absolutely. Marvel Stadium lags well behind the equivalent venues in Melbourne with its casual rate of pay and conditions. We are making some headway with management but unfortunately, we started from a very low base with the previous Workforce Planning Team. The new Workforce Planning Team at the stadium assisted by AFL People Business Partner team are listening and responding positively to the issues that are raised. From my perspective there really is no loyalty of casual staff to a particular venue. Many are registered with multiple venues in Melbourne and they eventually accept the shift that pays the highest which unfortunately leaves many venues with last minute cancellations and a depleted casual staff pool. It would be in the interest of the industry if casual rates of pay could become similar across all mass congregation venues in Melbourne.



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