

TRADE UNION STATISTICS : AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1977

INQUIRIES

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MAIN FEATURES

- The annual trade union collection showed that there were 281 reporting trade unions at the end of 1977.
- Total membership of unions decreased by 7,700 (0.3 per cent) in 1977 to 2,794,400. Males decreased by 8,100 (0.4 per cent) and females increased by 400.
- There were 25 unions with fewer than 100 members each and, as in 1976, nine unions with 80,000 or more members.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The figures contained in this bulletin have been compiled from data obtained from questionnaires sent to individual trade unions in the annual collection of membership of trade unions as at 31 December 1977. For comparison, figures for 1976 are also shown. Statistics for earlier years appear in previous issues of this bulletin and in *Labour Statistics* (6101.0) and the *Official Year Book Australia* (1301.0).

2. For the purpose of these statistics a trade union is defined as an organisation, consisting predominantly of employees, the principal activities of which include the negotiation of rates of pay and conditions of employment for its members.
3. Current lists of reporting trade unions are maintained by reference to lists of reporting trade unions used in previous years; by reference to trade unions registered under the provisions of the various Federal and State industrial arbitration Acts, trade union Acts, etc.; from names of unions reported to be engaged in conciliation and arbitration proceedings, etc.; and from reports of trade unions in trade journals, trade union and employer periodicals, newspapers, and other publications. It should be noted that not all reporting trade unions are registered under the relevant Federal or State industrial arbitration legislation or State trade union Acts. (See paragraph 8, page 2.)
4. The published number of reporting trade unions varies from year to year as a result of amalgamations and mergers of unions; unions ceasing to operate; new unions

being formed; existing organisations changing their status such that it brings them within the scope of the definition of a trade union (see paragraph 2); and existing unions reporting for the first time. These variations generally have little or no effect on total membership figures. Between 1976 and 1977 the number of reporting trade unions increased from 280 to 281. There was one amalgamation, the effect of which was that two unions were reduced to one; six unions reported for the first time and four unions ceased to operate.

5. The total membership of the reporting trade unions represents the aggregate of the membership of individual unions; persons who are members of more than one union are therefore counted more than once in the totals. The extent of this duplication is not known and it may vary over time. Total reported membership figures are affected by differences in the concept of membership adopted by various unions or by the same union at different times. Union rules on membership may follow different concepts and practices and this may be reflected in the level and fluctuations of the figures reported. Some unions confine their reported membership to "financial" members whilst others may also include "unfinancial" members. Individual unions may or may not include in their reported membership unemployed members, members who have retired from the labour force, disabled members, members with dues in arrears (who may be kept on union books for varying lengths of time), etc. Members of unions working overseas (e.g. in Papua New Guinea) are excluded from the reported membership data.

6. The membership figures in this publication are not directly comparable with those published in *Trade Union Members, November 1976* (6323.0) which were obtained from a sample survey of private dwellings, carried out in conjunction with the labour force survey conducted in that month. Some reasons for the differences are set out in that bulletin.

7. Membership of trade unions is shown separately for males and females for each State and Territory. The subdivision of total membership into males and females is not precise because some trade unions are unable to state the exact number of males and females among their members. The subdivision of total membership by States

and Territories is also not precise because some unions in the Territories are affiliated with State organisations and their membership is reported under the heading of that State. More accurate reporting of membership by location over the years is reflected in the annual figures for the Territories and this affects their comparability over time. For this reason the proportion of employees has not been calculated for the Territories.

8. When obtaining statistics from trade unions operating wholly within one State or district, trade union secretaries are asked to report whether or not the union is a branch of an interstate, or a larger State or district organisation. This reporting reduces the possibility of duplication in the figures of the number of unions and of membership. An interstate or federated trade union (i.e. a union with members in more than one State) is treated as a separate union in each State or Territory in which it has members, but is counted only once in the Australian total (see Table 1).

9. **Proportion of total employees.** The approximate percentages of wage and salary earners in employment (i.e. employees) who were members of trade unions is shown in Table 1. The estimates of total employees have been derived by adding figures for employees in agriculture and in private households employing staff to the estimates of employees in all other industries as at the end of each year. The percentages shown should be regarded as giving only a broad indication of the extent of union membership among employees because they are based on estimates of *employed* wage and salary earners that are subject to revision. The degree of unemployment of reported union members would affect the percentages for a particular year and comparisons over time. Percentages for the years 1966 to 1974 were published in the 1975 issue of this bulletin.

10. **Organisations registered under the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Act.** Details of employer

and employee organisations registered under this Act as at the end of 1977 are set out below with comparable (revised) figures for 1976 shown in brackets. There were 79 (78) employer organisations registered at the end of 1977. The number of employee unions registered was 144 (147), with membership of 2,303,800 (2,348,700) representing 82 (84) per cent of total membership of all reporting trade unions in Australia.

11. **Organisations registered under State industrial arbitration legislation, etc.** New South Wales organisations registered under provisions of the Trade Union Act and the Industrial Arbitration Act are listed periodically in the *New South Wales Industrial Gazette*. The annual reports of the President of the Industrial Court in Queensland contain a list of employer and employee unions registered under provisions of the *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act*. The *Western Australian Industrial Gazette* contains lists of unions of employers and workers registered under provisions of the *Industrial Arbitration Act*.

12. **Central labour organisations.** The main central labour organisations in Australia are the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA), the Council of Australian Government Employee Organisations (CAGEO), and the Council of Professional Associations (CPA). For information on these organisations reference should be made to the *Official Year Book*.

13. All publications produced by the ABS are listed in *Catalogue of Publications 1977* (1101.0).

* Less than 0.05 per cent.
r revised.

NOTE. Any discrepancies between totals and sums of components in tables are due to rounding.

R. J. CAMERON
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TABLE 1. TRADE UNIONS : NUMBER, MEMBERSHIP AND PROPORTION OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES

End of December –	N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld	S.A.	W.A.	Tas.	N.T. (a)	A.C.T. (a)	Aust.
Number of separate unions (b)									
1976	185	164	133	137	147	119	64	89	r(c)280
1977	186	162	131	140	149	120	65	88	(c)281
Number of members ('000)									
1976 –									
Males	720.0	504.1	270.8	186.4	r160.6	63.8	11.9	34.9	r1,952.6
Females	331.5	213.8	117.2	69.3	r72.7	23.0	4.1	18.0	r849.6
Persons	1,051.5	717.9	388.0	255.7	r233.3	86.9	16.0	52.9	r2,802.1
1977 –									
Males	703.8	509.6	269.0	189.0	162.5	65.0	11.0	34.4	1,944.4
Females	310.1	222.7	118.2	75.9	76.3	25.4	4.7	16.8	850.0
Persons	1,013.9	732.3	387.3	264.9	238.8	90.4	15.7	51.2	2,794.4
Proportion of total employees (d)									
– Per cent –									
1976 –									
Males	65	60	63	64	r61	69	(a)	(a)	63
Females	52	42	52	40	r50	47	(a)	(a)	r48
Persons	60	53	59	55	r57	61	(a)	(a)	57
1977 –									
Males	64	61	63	67	61	70	(a)	(a)	63
Females	48	44	52	44	51	50	(a)	(a)	47
Persons	58	55	59	58	57	63	(a)	(a)	57

(a) See paragraph 7, page 2. (b) See paragraph 4, page 1. (c) Without interstate duplication. See paragraph 8, page 2. (d) See paragraph 9, page 2.

TABLE 2. TRADE UNIONS : CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF MEMBERS, AUSTRALIA

Number of members	Number of separate unions (a)		Percentages of total unions		Number of members		Percentage of total members		Average number of members per union	
	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1977
			%	%	– ('000) –		%	%	(‘000)	(‘000)
Under 100	r26	25	8.9		1.3	1.1	*		*	
100 and under	250	32	37	13.2	5.0	5.9	0.2		0.2	
250 " "	500	32	27	9.6	11.2	9.8	0.4		0.4	
500 " "	1,000	42	43	15.3	29.6	29.9	1.1		0.7	
1,000 " "	2,000	37	40	14.2	52.7	58.0	2.1		1.5	
2,000 " "	5,000	38	36	12.8	119.6	115.9	4.1		3.2	
5,000 " "	10,000	21	21	7.5	147.8	152.1	5.4		7.2	
10,000 " "	20,000	r14	16	5.7	r195.8	228.9	8.2		14.3	
20,000 " "	30,000	9	8	2.8	217.2	205.2	7.3		25.7	
30,000 " "	40,000	8	7	2.5	279.6	246.6	8.8		35.2	
40,000 " "	50,000	5	5	1.8	225.1	223.8	8.0		44.8	
50,000 " "	80,000	7	7	2.5	430.7	425.1	15.2		60.7	
80,000 and over		9	9	3.2	1,086.6	1,091.8	39.1		121.3	
Total	r280	281	100.0		r2,802.1	2,794.4	100.0		9.9	

(a) See paragraph 4, page 1.

TABLE 3. TRADE UNIONS : AREA OF OPERATIONS, AUSTRALIA

End of December –	Unions operating in (a) –							Total all unions
	1 State	2 States	3 States	4 States	5 States	6 States	2 to 6 States (b)	
Number of separate unions (c)								
1976	r138	8	8	13	23	90	142	r280
1977	140	8	8	9	24	92	141	281
Number of members ('000)								
1976	r191.6	17.9	71.8	98.2	229.9	2,192.8	2,610.6	r2,802.1
1977	198.5	17.6	66.1	90.1	155.6	2,266.5	2,595.9	2,794.4

(a) Certain unions have, in addition to branches in the States, branches in the Northern Territory and in the Australian Capital Territory. See paragraph 8, page 2. (b) Total of previous five columns. Figures refer to interstate or federated unions. (c) See paragraph 4, page 1.