

INQUIRIES

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- write to Information Services, ABS, P.O. Box 10, Belconnen A.C.T. 2616

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TRADE UNION STATISTICS : AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1976

MAIN FEATURES

- The annual trade union collection showed that there were 282 reporting trade unions at the end of 1976 — two more than in 1975.
- Total membership of unions decreased by 21,900 (0.8 per cent) in 1976 to 2,791,900, the first decrease since 1961. Males decreased by 15,400 (0.8 per cent) and females by 6,600 (0.8 per cent).
- There were 29 unions with fewer than 100 members each and 9 unions with 80,000 or more members. Although the average number of members per union was approximately 9,900 almost three quarters of the unions had fewer than 5,000 members and half had fewer than 1,200 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 1976. For comparison, figures for 1975 are also shown. Statistics for earlier years appear in earlier issues of this bulletin and in the *Labour Report* (Reference No. 6.7) and the *Official Year Book*.

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 paragraphs 8 and 9 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 1975 and 1976 the number of reporting trade unions increased from 280 to 282. There were a number of amalgamations or mergers, the effect of which was that six unions were reduced to three; seven unions reported for the first time and two 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* (Reference No. 6.65) 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 previous 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 1976 are set out below with comparable (revised) figures for 1975 shown in brackets. There were 78 (78) employer organisations registered at the end of 1976. The number of employee unions registered was 147 (147), with membership of 2,348,700 (2,364,500) representing 84 (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 *Publications of the Australian Bureau of Statistics* (Reference No. 1.8).

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

R. J. CAMERON
Australian Statistician

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)									
1975	187	159	134	135	147	117	62	87	(c)280
1976	185	164	133	137	147	119	64	89	(c)282
Number of members ('000)									
1975 -									
Males	733.5	506.2	275.2	187.3	155.0	64.2	11.2	33.3	1,966.0
Females	341.5	216.1	117.9	68.2	59.3	23.2	4.0	17.6	847.9
Persons	1,075.0	722.3	393.1	255.6	214.3	87.4	15.2	50.9	2,813.8
1976 -									
Males	720.0	504.1	270.8	186.4	158.7	63.8	11.9	34.9	1,950.6
Females	331.5	213.8	117.2	69.3	64.4	23.0	4.1	18.0	841.3
Persons	1,051.5	717.9	388.0	255.7	223.1	86.9	16.0	52.9	2,791.9
Proportion of total employees (d)									
- Per cent -									
1975 -									
Males	65	60	64	66	60	69	(a)	(a)	63
Females	53	43	54	41	43	49	(a)	(a)	48
Persons	61	53	60	57	54	62	(a)	(a)	58
1976 -									
Males	65	60	63	64	60	69	(a)	(a)	63
Females	52	42	52	40	45	47	(a)	(a)	47
Persons	60	53	59	55	55	61	(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)		Percentage of total unions		Number of members		Percentage of total members		Average number of members per union	
	Dec. 1975	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1975	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1976	Dec. 1976
			%		- ('000) -		%		('000)	
Under 100	30	29	10.3	1.4	1.3	0.1	0.1		0.1	
100 and under 250	33	32	11.3	5.3	5.0	0.2	0.2		0.2	
250 " " 500	31	32	11.3	11.5	11.2	0.4	0.4		0.4	
500 " " 1,000	38	42	14.9	26.3	29.6	1.1	0.7		1.1	
1,000 " " 2,000	38	37	13.1	54.5	52.7	1.9	1.4		1.9	
2,000 " " 5,000	40	38	13.5	130.4	119.6	4.3	3.2		4.3	
5,000 " " 10,000	19	21	7.5	129.2	147.8	5.3	7.0		5.3	
10,000 " " 20,000	14	13	4.6	207.6	185.6	6.6	14.3		6.6	
20,000 " " 30,000	8	9	3.2	200.5	217.2	7.8	24.1		7.8	
30,000 " " 40,000	7	8	2.8	239.1	279.6	10.0	35.0		10.0	
40,000 " " 50,000	5	5	1.8	225.3	225.1	8.1	45.0		8.1	
50,000 " " 80,000	8	7	2.5	485.8	430.7	15.4	61.5		15.4	
80,000 and over	9	9	3.2	1,097.2	1,086.6	38.9	120.7		38.9	
Total	280	282	100.0	2,813.8	2,791.9	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)							
1975	139	8	7	14	25	87	141	280
1976	140	8	8	13	23	90	142	282
	Number of members ('000)							
1975	168.5	18.0	57.3	147.6	202.1	2,220.3	2,645.3	2,813.8
1976	181.4	17.9	71.8	98.2	229.9	2,192.8	2,610.6	2,791.9

(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 on federated unions. (c) See paragraph 4, page 1.