BLUE MOUNTAINS UNIONS & COMMUNITY ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

FEDERAL ELECTION

Campaigning in the most marginal seat in the country dominated our activities for much of the last 12 months. Insecure work was a major focus. While Australia remains one of the richest countries in the world, there's also growing inequality. For many workers the true value of their pay packet is going backwards, while corporate profits have risen massively, and the cost of living continues to rise sharply. So central to the BMUC's contribution to the election was our support for the ACTU's campaign against insecure work. As one of the flyers we delivered to thousands of homes in the Hawkesbury stated:

"The workers in our community have been at the forefront of the pandemic, working tirelessly to keep our community safe, but they are exhausted, facing burnout and are under great pressure. We need to make sure they have safe, secure jobs and a decent wage"

As always in elections we followed BMUC's original aims and objectives, as written by our founders a quarter of a century ago: which includes,

"Supporting the election of people at the local, state and national level who will best serve the interests of wage and salary earners."

Congratulations to Susan Templeman, a long standing BMUC member for winning a third term representing the people of Macquarie with a swing of 7.5%. It was a well-deserved reward for all Susan's hard work - not just during the election campaign but throughout the last three years. Trade unionists who knocked on doors in the traditionally conservative Hawkesbury end of the electorate reported that Susan's popularity was built on her reputation for listening and responding to community concerns.

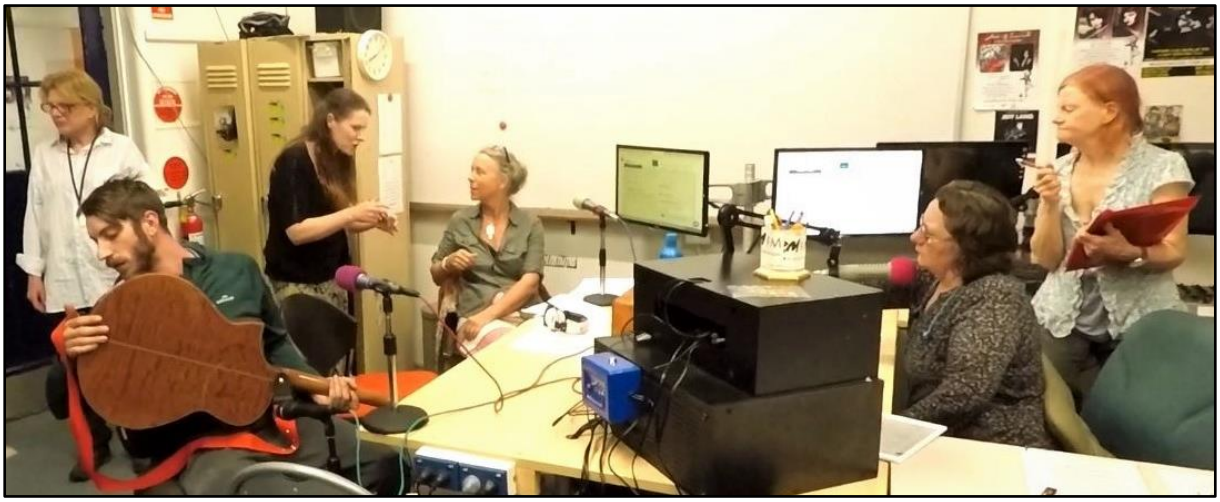
Congratulations also to a much more recent BMUC member Tony Hickey for increasing the Green vote in Macquarie after having been nominated as a candidate late in the campaign after the withdrawal of the original Green candidate.



Insecure work was a major focus for unions in the federal election. A sample of unions' letterboxing material

COMMUNITY RADIO

Once again our weekly radio program ***Rights Rorts & Rants*** played an important role in highlighting a range of crucial issues from government corruption to the age care crisis to living with climate change, while playing an eclectic mix of music, including the work of talented local musos. Among many stimulating programs highlights included special reports by our legal correspondent Mike Holland, who gave a series of forensic reports on the nature of government corruption, highlighting the importance of the new government's plans to create an independent federal body to investigate political corruption. The radio team, led by Deb Smith, Fran Dyson and Merran Maclaren and supported by Peter Lammiman, Nick Franklin, Ann-Maree McEwan, Jeanie Baxter was expanded this year to include Kerry Cooke, Graeme Cole, Bruce Cornwell and Stephen Whale. The radio collective is always open to new members and fresh ideas.



Presenters and Guests in the Radio Blue Mountains 89.1FM studio

POLITICS IN THE PUB

In February the event *'Catch the Crooks!'* was especially significant for us - our first Politics-in-the Pub for two years after COVID rules had restricted meetings. It was one of our most successful ever - a packed room heard about Australia's other pandemic - the Pork Barrel Pandemic. The speakers, Ross Jones, founding member of Federal ICAC Now, award winning journalist Andrew Fowler and our own Michael Holland, a retired lawyer clearly outlined the depth of government corruption and the case for a Federal ICAC. It was encouraging to see those candidates supporting a Federal ICAC won significant support in the election.



L to R Mike Holland, Ross Jones and Andrew Fowler at Politics in the Pub "Catch the Crooks"

AGED CARE

We supported our members working in aged care in their campaign to make staffing ratios law, to have at least one registered nurse on site at all times, real wage increases for aged care workers and accountability on how funding is spent.



Braving the weather at NSWNMA's Katoomba rally in support of those who need and work in Aged Care

REBUILD TAFE

During the election our members supported the campaign for a properly funded TAFE system, and the drive to end the skills shortage crisis. This included joining a rally addressed by ACTU secretary Sally McManus outside Wentworth Falls TAFE.



NSWTF & BMUC calling for Secure Jobs in TAFE

May Day

This year the BMUC was given the honour of heading the annual May Day march from Sydney Town Hall (where we heard inspirational speeches from front line workers) to Parliament House in Macquarie Street.



BMUC at the head of the 2022 Sydney May Day march

Dare to Struggle Film Festival

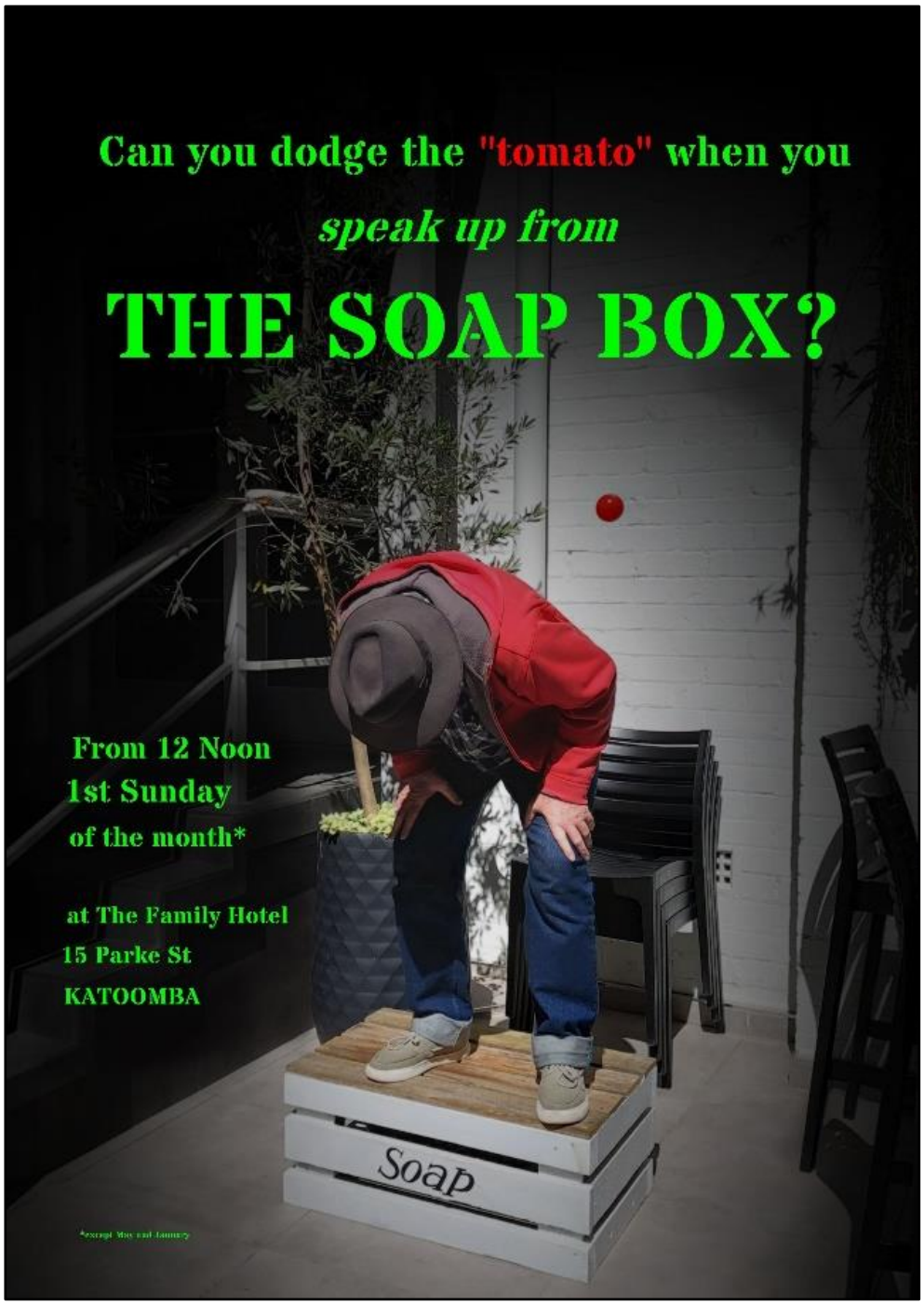
Our entry for this union backed short film competition produced and edited by Deb Smith told the story of our Sing It Say It music events. Although it didn't make the final, we'll be sure to enter next year and are already gathering material for a new production. We're planning to show our Dare To Struggle production, along with some of the best entries at a film night later this year. It'll also be a chance to view the documentary recently made by our member, award winning journalist Matt Peacock for the CFMEU entitled 'Lethal Bias: The war on Australia's construction workers'.



Promotional image of BMUC's Dare To Struggle entry "Sing It! Say It! An Activist Fest Talent Quest"

THE SOAP BOX

We have always believed in the importance of free speech. Now our member Graeme Cole has launched an event to test our powers of public speaking in the most traditional way. On the first Sunday in the month immediately after our BMUC regular meeting there's an open invitation to any BMUC member or member of the public to step on the Soap Box (handcrafted by Blackheath Men's Shed) in the beer garden of the Family Hotel and speak for two minutes on any subject. The audience is armed with imitation tomatoes - soft red balls to give speakers feedback according to their performance.



"The Soap Box" poster

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership hovers around 50 and has dipped during the two years of COVID, exacerbated by (now fixed) problems with our automatic payment system. There'll be a vigorous membership drive in the coming months, kicking off with a social midyear.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Our Face Book page has 827 followers, Twitter has 2239 followers. The blog has had 523,735 page views since it began.

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

Many thanks to Fran Dyson and Mick Dzwinek for opening up their home for our annual Christmas party, this year with the added bonus of a Know-Your -Member fund raising trivia contest. Contestants were given the chance to buy answers from the BMUC's Pork Barrel (not as well stocked as the NSW Government's, but a nice little earner for the BMUC bank balance).



Some of our radio team at the BMUC Christmas Social

Thanks

As ever to our hard working Secretary Deb Smith who continues to put in extraordinary hours for the cause; to our Management Committee - Paul Wray, Norm Short, Peter Lammiman, Bruce Cornwell, Ann-Maree McEwen and Nick Franklin, to our comrades at Unions NSW for their support during the election campaign; to the Family Hotel for their generous support as ever. We thank Norm Short, who has resigned from the Management Committee, for the time, energy and experience he has devoted to unionism and BMUC.

Mountains Community Resource Network

Once again I'd like to record our appreciation to MCRN for their continued support.

The Year Ahead

Given a state election is less than a year away, we'll be campaigning on the key issues of concern to trade unionists, including support for TAFE, schools, health workers and the cost of living generally.

As a young man said many years ago the times they are a-changin', and I can't improve on these words I heard recently from a worker in the aged care campaign "To win change you have to speak out, stand up and fight"

Kerry Cooke
President

16th June 2022

Blue Mountains Unions & Community
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http://l.ead.me/bmuc