

**OUR JOBS
OUR HEALTH
OUR FUTURE**

**State Election 2022
Policy Platform**



OUR JOBS

OUR HEALTH

OUR FUTURE

SA Unions is South Australia's united trades and labor council, the peak voice for the South Australian union movement. The council collectively represents approximately 160,000 union members in industries right across SA, from hospitality to the public sector, from construction to policing, from nurses and ambulance officers to abattoir workers and teachers.

South Australians deserve a prosperous, healthy and bright future. We deserve secure, good quality jobs so we can take care of our families and plan for the future.

We deserve a world class health care system that's there for every South Australian when they need it and is built to protect us in times of crisis.

We deserve a strong plan for our economy that delivers good jobs today and provides our children with the same opportunities we've been given. We deserve a strong plan to make our community better and deliver prosperity for our families.

SA Unions are deeply committed to achieving these things for our community.

In this State Election 2022 Policy Platform we outline 5 key policies with specific actions in the following areas to deliver that vision for our state:

1. Fix the health system
2. A strong public sector
3. Secure work
4. Safe respectful work
5. Jobs, skills and industry plan for South Australia

We invite you to join us and help deliver a better future for you, your family and all South Australians.

Dale Beasley
Secretary- SA Unions



Demi Pnevmatikos
President - SA Unions



FIX THE HEALTH SYSTEM

Policy statement

SA Unions wants to see a world class health care system in our state that's there for every South Australian when they need it, which employs health workers in good, secure jobs and is built to protect us in times of crisis.

What are the problems?

The very least a community should expect from government is commitment to keep them safe, particularly given the uncertainty created by the global pandemic and the health impacts of climate change.

SA Unions believes that chronic underinvestment and funding cuts have left us far from that, with a health system which is unable to manage current demand and will not cope with the health crises of the future.

This is at a time when South Australia is effectively COVID free but with the spectre of interstate lockdowns being lifted and borders re-opened within months resulting in a probable surge in COVID cases.

There is an urgent need for the state government to address the chronic lack of capacity in our ailing and overwhelmed health sector. To continually fail to heed the widespread warnings by health workers and experts in the community is to invite disaster.

• On average 91 people are waiting in emergency departments for a bed, sometimes for more than 24 hours creating the potential for delayed or missed care.

• Fatigue and burnout levels amongst medical staff are higher than ever.



• Over half (56.1%) of nurses and midwives surveyed recently, intend leaving the health system within five years, creating a catastrophic shortfall.

• For many years, only around half of the more than 1,300 graduating nurses and midwives in South Australia are offered graduate places with SA Health. This is despite the fact local health networks don't even have the staff numbers to fill shifts and SA Health, inexplicably, is offering voluntary separation packages to an already under-staffed workforce.

• Huge numbers of mental health patients are jammed in emergency departments that are not equipped to deal with their needs.

• Ambulance emergency workload is increasing year on year, without any increase in the paramedic workforce to safely meet the demand, and Ambos are at risk often working excessive hours without a break.

• In the last 3 years ambulance response times are the worst on record and ambulances are not getting to life threatening emergencies inside acceptable timeframes. Patients in the community are at risk as a consequence and some are even dying while waiting for an ambulance to arrive.

- In the last 3 years Ambulance ramping has gone through the roof and this further prevents ambulances from attending emergencies in the community.
- Country emergency departments have been left without a doctor or paramedic staffing.
- Services in major hospitals suffer from the use of private contractors engaged in profit gouging and staff exploitation.

What needs to happen?

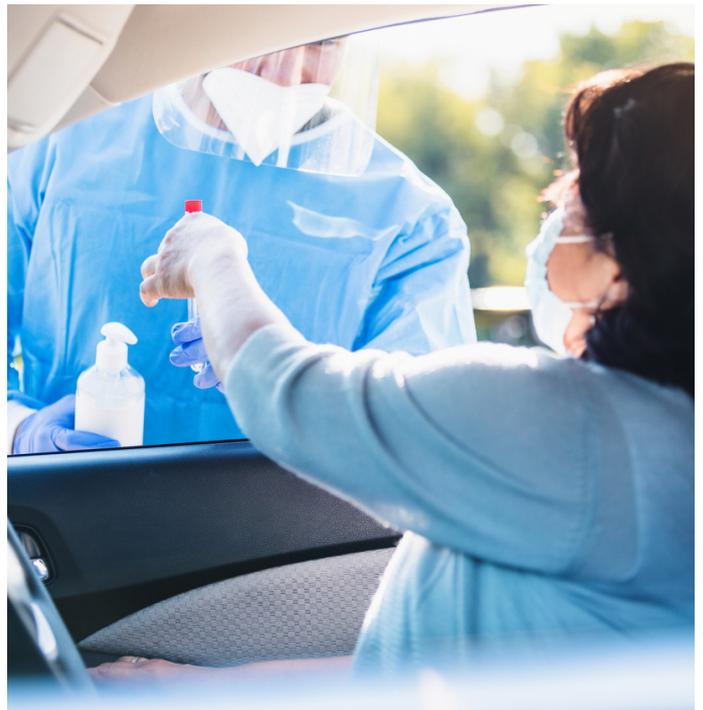
SA Unions calls for an emergency financial package that:

- 1.Addresses the crisis in our emergency departments by opening more beds and employing more staff to meet the impending crisis.
2. Ensures major recruitment of doctors, nurses, scientific and medical professionals, administrative workers, and support staff to meet the current crisis and future needs.
3. Introduces major spending increases to ensure mental health patients are given the care they need and are not forced into emergency departments that are not equipped to deal with their needs.
4. Increases ambulance resourcing so that the ambulance service is able to meet the growth in workload and response times, now and into the future, and keep the SA Community safe and provide safe working conditions for Ambos
5. Take action on ramping to free-up ambulances to respond to emergencies in the community.

6. Exit from the contract for support services at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and return those services to directly employed public sector workers.

7. In source other facility and support services done by private contractors at public hospitals including security work.

8.Increase funding and support for mental health and psychosocial health workers.



A STRONG PUBLIC SECTOR

Policy position

SA Unions is opposed to the privatisation of public services and assets believing that a strong and effective public sector is vital to the SA economy and social health and wellbeing.

This policy is adopted based on the following beliefs and evidence.

SA Unions believes that a strong public sector is vital to the South Australian economy and community. Equitable access to well-resourced, high-quality public services, that are comprehensive and affordable, is a democratic right for all South Australians.

We believe publicly owned assets and public services are funded by South Australians to meet the needs of the community not to generate profits for corporations. Services that are publicly owned are transparent in their operations and accountable through the checks and balances of democratic government.

We note that 'privatisation' is a term that covers a multitude of policies from the outright sale of government enterprises like the Electricity Trust of South Australia to the transfer, in whole or in part, of public assets and/or service provision from government to an entity outside government. It includes the outsourcing of service delivery, sale of public assets, 'user choice', voucher systems, public-private partnerships, commissioning, social impact investment, and mutualisation.

The experience in South Australia and internationally is that privatisation of services nearly always results in one or more of the following impacts: reduced/inferior services; higher costs; reductions in worker's rights, pay and conditions, monopoly practices; increased inequalities; and the diminished capacity of government to respond to emergencies and changing societal/economic need.

We are concerned that decisions to privatise services are often made with no prior consultation or warning and are often preceded by outright denials that there is any intention to privatise.

Decisions pander to vested interests and are 'justified' by private sector firms and consultants/contractors advocating the primacy of the private sector in providing advice, consultation, research, reviews, evaluations and undertaking policy and planning work previously delivered by state authorities/public agencies.

We are also concerned that privatisations undermine confidence in the capability of the public service and 'hollow out' the capacity of the public sector to undertake its role or take on new services.

We believe that the government must properly resource high quality public services and look at every opportunity to expand the role of the public sector to meet the existing and emerging needs of the South Australian community.

We consider that the public service must be strengthened so it can respond rapidly and effectively when threats to public safety and health arise.

What needs to happen

Political parties must commit to retaining public services in public hands, and oppose privatisation. A legislative framework should be put in place to discourage any tendency towards privatisation by future governments. Such a framework should:

- ensure a public interest test is applied before any privatisation is considered.
- maintain pay and conditions of employment for any privatised jobs; and
- guarantee ongoing public accountability and transparency for any privatised services.

Comprehensive alternatives to privatisation and measures to ensure that any proposed privatisation is properly scrutinised are addressed in detailed submissions to the Select Committee on the Privatisation of Public Services in South Australia. We endorse and adopt the recommendations made to the Committee by the Public Services International (PSI) – Oceania and by Dexter Whitfield (Adjunct Associate Professor, Australian Industrial Transformation Unit, Flinders University).



SECURE WORK

Policy statement

SA Unions believes that we all benefit when everyone has access to secure work. Workers can spend and plan with confidence, creating more jobs in their local communities.

SA Unions wants to build an economy that works for everyone. We all benefit from working people having secure, reliable jobs. A State Economic Plan is needed which will support and create secure jobs for women and men, in the public and private sector, in cities and country towns, for young people as well as older workers.

What are the problems?

Too many workers in South Australia today don't have enough paid work, have no job security, or don't have a job at all. They can't plan their lives because they don't know from one day to the next what hours they will be working. They can't take a day off work sick out of fear of losing their job. Having a reliable job you can count on has been a foundation of our way of life, but it's already out of reach for too many.

This has not happened naturally. Inequality is a feature of government policy. Big business has been allowed to structure its workforce to deliberately shift risk onto working people through the casualisation of permanent work, the use of outsourcing and labour hire, on-demand gig work, or precarious employment in supply chains.

Government policies have deliberately enabled businesses to provide less secure work, and encouraged them to hire on a casual basis, limiting workers' rights to act collectively and facilitating widespread wage theft.

The economic recovery is not shared. The consequences of the pandemic and the recession have been shared very unevenly. Big business profits actually went up during the crisis – the first time in history that business profits grew during a recession. By comparison more workers than ever are in multiple jobs, real wages are in decline, casual work is growing faster than at any time in our history. Investments in jobs, wages, services, and physical and social infrastructure could drive stable, inclusive growth, and a more robust recovery from the pandemic.

South Australia has one of the highest rates of precarious employment in the country. Women comprise the majority of workers in industries with high levels of precarious work and low wages and women have been among the most affected by job losses due to the pandemic.

Casual workers are 3 times more likely to have their pay set at minimum award rates than permanent full-time employees. Insecure work is a direct contributor to Australia's low wage growth crisis.

Insecure work is unsafe work. High rates of injury, illness, and sexual harassment are prevalent in industries with high numbers of insecure workers. Insecure work with inadequate hours and training was a significant contributor to the spread of COVID in aged care across Australia in 2020.

Inequality is at a 70 year high. Millions of people cannot find enough work if they can find a job at all. Wage growth is at record lows and the gender-based pay gap is still stubbornly high. Wage theft is rampant, and employers are increasingly undermining working conditions. This is made worse in many industries by a systematic exploitation of temporary visa workers.

The problems we are facing are a direct result of government policies that have attacked unions, eroded the rights of working people, and allowed employers to exploit inadequate industrial laws. Many workers have watched as good, secure jobs left their communities, only to be replaced with low wage, precarious work, if they were replaced at all.

Young South Australians face particularly acute employment challenges. They are the first fired and the last rehired. We need powerful, targeted measures to get young people working, and prevent lifelong scarring of their careers and incomes.

Solutions require legislative change and a new policy approach. The union movement is committed to campaigning for reform that will create reliable jobs and support moves underway to legislate against wage theft.



What needs to happen?

It is the position of SA Unions that government should:

1. Recognise that empowered workers and their unions are the best solution to wage theft and ensure that laws properly empower workers and their unions to take action to deal with wage theft when it arises, including by strengthening the powers of the SAET to make binding orders and enforce them.

2. Same job / same pay in labour hire to end the business model based on cutting workers' pay and conditions and reverse the changes to South Australian Labour Hire Licensing Legislation that took place in July 2020, so the scheme applies across all industries.

3. Ensure that the government maintains wage parity for workers in outsourced work.

4. Make gender equity a primary objective of the State Fair Work Act.

5. Amend the portable long service leave act and system to include civil and engineering construction, and all on-demand workers, giving them stronger rights and protection.

6. Amend long service leave act to ensure all workers become entitled to long service leave at 7 and 10 years.

7. Strengthen procurement policies to be consistent with other jurisdictions like the ACT. Ensure government contracts prioritise secure well-paid jobs and an end to subcontracting and sham contracting.

8. Ensure high levels of secure work within the public sector.

SAFE RESPECTFUL WORK

Policy Statement

SA Unions believe good health and safety is a fundamental human right and this includes work that contributes to our good health. We support action to ensure South Australian workers and their unions are able to take steps that ensure their health and safety in the workplace.

It is SA Unions' policy that all workers should be provided with safe, respectful work, protected by effective and responsive regulatory systems including powers for unions to seek redress for workers in unsafe work environments.

What are the problems?

A worker is killed every month in South Australia. Hundreds more die each year from diseases caused by their work. The re-emergence of deadly occupational diseases such as silicosis and pneumoconiosis (black lung), along with a workplace mental health epidemic highlights that progress on health and safety is not guaranteed and requires the concerted efforts of governments, employers and unions.

It is critical that South Australian workers and their unions are empowered to take steps to ensure their health and safety in the workplaces.

Insecure work, in its many forms, further threatens our goals for healthy and safe work. It is linked with poor safety outcomes and has negative impacts on the physical and psychological health of workers. The provision of secure, ongoing work is a key factor in improving health and safety outcomes for workers and is an essential feature of decent work.

Insecure work is both more prevalent amongst, and has greater impact on, vulnerable sections of the workforce, including young, women and immigrant workers. The rise of 'gig' work has seen the transfer of risk from employers to workers; the risk includes threats to workers' health and safety and the capacity to enjoy a safe and healthy work environment. Insecure work also undermines the health and safety of those in permanent employment.

The climate crisis facing Australia further threatens healthy and safe work. Increasing temperatures and the ongoing threat of natural disasters such as bushfires, will see workers exposed to extreme temperatures and poor air quality.

Poor mental health means that 1 in 5 workers will take time off work to deal with mental health issues. This doubles to 2 in 5 for workers in mentally unhealthy work. Psychological injury and illness are now the fastest, and one of the only, growing injury types in our workers' compensation system.

On just about every indicator Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers reported higher levels of exposure to risks and lower levels of employer action to protect their physical and psychological health.

All workers have an equal right to healthy safe and respectful work, without discrimination and free from violence and aggression. However, workers in many industries face significant threats to their physical and psychological health from gendered violence, racial discrimination, and occupational violence.

Health should be considered a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Workers must be protected from all hazards and risks at work, including psychosocial as well as physical hazards and risks.

Workers who are injured at work must be afforded the highest level of support to seek treatment and return to meaningful work.

Injured and ill workers must receive financial supports to ensure no loss of real income throughout their injury as well as the highest possible medical, rehabilitation and vocational support. These costs should not be borne by the worker or by the Australian taxpayer and should be funded by levying the businesses and industries which cause harm.

Workers who are empowered to act collectively through their unions are safer and healthier at work. Worker elected, union trained and supported health and safety representatives (HSRs) are a critical determinant of healthy safe and respectful work.

What needs to happen?

SA Unions requires that governments work with Unions to promote safe and respectful work by:

1.Reforming the WHS regulatory framework to:

a) Ensure that workers and unions have the capacity to ensure safety in the workplace including removing unnecessary legal impediments on the roles of workplace health and safety representatives ('HSRS') and union WHS entry permit holders consistent with other Australian jurisdictions like the ACT and Victoria.

b) introduce effective regulation to prevent harm from psychosocial risks at work,

c) ensure the workers compensation and rehabilitation systems support workers to regain their health and obtain or maintain secure, safe, and healthy employment and/or financial compensation post

injury/illness. Remove the cessation of weekly payments after 2 years and medical expenses after 3 years,

d) implementing recommendations contained in the Mansfield Review,

e) prevent workers' exposure to hazardous dusts and increase support to identify and care for those who have contracted occupational diseases,

f) help protect workers from the impacts of climate change such as working in high temperatures and poor air quality,

g) explicitly prohibit sexual harassment at work and require that employers take reasonable measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation,

2.Minimising the prevalence of insecure work and the risks it poses to health and safety,

3.Introducing the charge of industrial manslaughter,

4.Granted 10 days paid Family and Domestic Violence leave to all workers,

5.Enshrining paid pandemic leave for all workers including contractors,

6.Enacting legislation that provides standing for unions and workers to take action against employers who fail to ensure the safety health and welfare of workers, including legal standing to bring civil cases for contraventions of the law.

7.Take steps to ensure that South Australia has a fully funded and active Safework SA that is a capable and effective regulator in the industry; is able to identify safety issues in the workplace to prevent accidents and successfully prosecuting safety breaches when they do occur.

JOBS, SKILLS, AND INDUSTRY PLAN FOR SA

Policy statement

SA Unions will press governments and industry to create more high quality, decent jobs, and to promote, support, and encourage local industries that provide good secure employment.

We encourage the rebuilding of TAFE and quality vocational and higher education systems as key enablers of quality jobs, skills and industries. We will support strong action on climate change and the reconfiguration of government procurement to support local industry and create secure local jobs.

Industry and innovation

To create more, decent jobs, we need to promote, support, and encourage local industries that provide good secure employment.

Industry policy must link firmly with the vocational and higher education sector to ensure SA maintains a critical mass of local skills in all industries. There must be enough new workers being trained to staff existing and emerging industries. SA Unions believes that industry policy should focus on key areas of growth due to technological, environmental, and demographic changes.

SA Unions sees opportunities in South Australia presented by the technology, digital and automation economy but the benefits must be shared with those implementing and affected by the changes; workers, and their communities.

We recognise the importance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and industry policy

should support them in their efforts to provide good, secure jobs, improve their productivity and to assist them to grow into large employers. Industry policy needs to provide support for SME's to equip them with the capabilities to meet the needs of emerging industries to maximise local content opportunities.

South Australia must also use strategic public investment to encourage innovation that solves public problems. As well as using South Australia's existing research development capacity government needs to directly produce new public goods in its own right, rather than simply attempting to intervene in markets created by the private sector.

We need to develop the role of the public sector to enable its dynamic participation in industry and the economy. Where necessary we should encourage public sector agencies to engage in risk-taking and market setting, as an involved participant that advocates for the public benefit throughout the (multi-decade) life of strategic public projects.

Public investment will produce good quality jobs, that develop workers' capacity, skills and job security as a fundamental part of the way the economy operates.

Vocational and higher education

SA Unions believe that quality vocational and higher education systems should support those seeking employment for the first time, those who missed opportunities at school, and those who seek retraining and further education throughout to enter new and emerging industries.

Quality vocational and higher education can help millions of people find opportunity, skills, careers, and purpose in their lives. Every Australian should have access to quality vocational and higher education.

As South Australia rebuilds post the COVID-19 pandemic, the TAFE and not-for-profit training system is well placed to help our communities build essential skills and thrive. Funding cuts and contestable funding policy settings have led to an increasingly privatised vocational education system that undermines the quality of vocational education and training. The wholesale removal of vocational courses from TAFE that has occurred under the current government must be reversed.

Support local jobs and industry through government procurement and investment

Government procurement must be reconfigured to support local industry and create secure local jobs. Companies that win government tenders should meet the highest standards of treatment of their workers and conditions.

A narrow focus on cheapest price rather than the broader economic benefit of procurement disadvantages local industry and costs jobs. Tax funds must go to secure, well-paid jobs with government setting the clear expectations as a model employer. We need to see an end to subcontracting and sham contracting. Companies that break industrial laws should not be awarded lucrative government contracts.

Job creation requires fostering demand for the locally produced goods and services that boost the spending power of working people. This includes opportunities for growth in jobs in renewable and environmental industries, growth in transitioning industries, and specialist skills in changing the way industries operate.

Government should also create good quality jobs by expanding the public sector. The government can leverage the dual roles of legislator/policy setter and employer in order to enable its dynamic

participation in industry and the economy, and lead as an employer of choice.

Create good jobs in new and emerging industries

SA Unions is committed to action on climate change and that the action we take is good for workers. We can create good clean jobs, reduce emissions, look after working people and create a bright future. That's why climate action is union business.

We acknowledge that a transition toward a sustainable, carbon constrained economy is essential, but that that this transition poses challenges and uncertainties. The transition is presenting opportunities and risks in a range of industries, including opportunities for growth in jobs in renewable and environmental industries, and in transitioning industries.

We recognise the unprecedented opportunity for South Australia to lead the country in advanced manufacturing and support sovereign industry capability in the country's emerging defence sector by building Australia's future Naval fleet. This opportunity will lead a strong and highly skilled manufacturing sector in this state.

We also recognise that significant growth is forecast in South Australia in the healthcare and social assistance industry, an area frequently missed in industry planning. It will be vital that the right settings are put in place to enable the skills development and growth in this sector, not just to create good jobs but to ensure the health of South Australians.

Policies settings which could be adopted to help maximise the job-creating potential during this transition include:

- Setting greenhouse gas reduction targets that are consistent with our obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement and scientific advice, supported by an effective carbon pollution reduction policy.
- Providing support for cooperative and non-profit community renewable energy ventures.
- Increasing State support for sustainable infrastructure investments at state and local levels.
- Enhancing the capacity of Australian suppliers of energy storage, solar, wind (onshore and offshore), Hydrogen, ammonia, biomass and other renewable energy equipment and services, including support export opportunities.
- Providing support for local manufacturers and suppliers of renewable energy products and for reducing the dependency on foreign shipping in Australia's manufacturing and renewable energy supply chains.
- Providing incentives for energy conservation retrofitting of lighting, insulation and other energy saving initiatives in commercial and large-scale residential buildings.

What needs to happen?

It is SA Unions' position that South Australia requires a comprehensive jobs, skills, and industry plan which:

Industry and innovation

- 1.Improves the connections between research and development, innovation, and production,
- 2.Includes strategies which ensure that industry is productive, effective, sustainable,
- 3.Ensures the benefits of industry support can be enjoyed by workers and communities by maximising our sovereign capability.

Vocational and higher education

- 1.Rebuilds the TAFE, not for profit training and higher education sector, and invests in the development of the teaching workforce to ensure South Australians can equip themselves with the skills to enter industry during this time of evolution and transition.

2.Halts the privatisation of trade certificate training.

3.Ensures union representation on industry training boards and committees, and restores integrity and workers voices to the training and skills commission.

Support local jobs and industry through government procurement and investment

1.Supports good quality jobs in the public sector in order to enable government's dynamic participation in industry and the economy.

2.Includes a sustainable manufacturing strategy and increased local content in government procurement contracts.

3.Reconfigures government procurement to support local industry that develops quality, ethical, secure local jobs, ensures high standards of workplace conditions at companies who apply for, and win, government tendered work, and which disqualifies companies that break industrial laws including wage theft laws.

Create good jobs in new and emerging industries

1.Is ambitious in support for the strategic industries of tomorrow.

2.Supports the expected growth in the healthcare and social assistance industry.

3.Invests in energy transition as a vital component of national reconstruction and response to climate change.

4.Assisting emissions intensive, trade exposed industries to transition to lower emissions technologies and invest with confidence in new capital upgrades.

5.Supports workers in emissions intensive, trade exposed industries to transition to the new sustainable jobs in a just way with a clear plan.

