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Union membership down; Coles appeal to proceed; and more

Tuesday, October 27, 2015, 4:30pm

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ACTU says ABS membership figures don't add up

The ACTU is questioning the accuracy of ABS data released today saying union membership has slipped to just 1.6 million, or a new low of 15% of the workforce.

The peak body says its 46 affiliated unions reported membership of 1.8 million this month, and secretary Dave Oliver says "there hasn't been a significant change to this since last August when the ABS survey was taken."

The data shows that union density in the private sector dropped to 11% (down from 12% a year earlier) and 39% (41.7%) in the public sector.

Trade union membership is now being collected only every two years, and is part of a new survey, Characteristics of Employment.

[Characteristics of Employment, Australia, August 2014, 6333.0](#)

FWC grants permission for employee to appeal Coles ruling

An FWBC full bench has today granted permission for a Coles Supermarkets employee to challenge the approval of the chain's agreement.

Vice President Graeme Watson, Deputy President John Kovacic and Commissioner Julius Roe accepted that employee Duncan Hart had an arguable case that Commissioner Geoff Bull didn't correctly apply the BOOT to the agreement.

However, it noted that if the appeal established any shortcomings, they would be likely to be "capable of rectification through appropriate undertakings".

The full bench also extended time for the AMIEU to lodge its appeal, which relies on similar grounds to that of Hart.

Commissioner Geoff Bull conditionally approved the Coles agreement on June 10.

Article on Ross's Lawler comments updated

The *Workplace Express* [article](#) on Thursday's appearance in a Senate Estimates hearing by FWC President Iain Ross has been updated to include links to his opening statement and the documents he tabled.

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