



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *The Sydney Alliance: a broad-based community organising potential for trade union transformation?*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/91311/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Holgate, J orcid.org/0000-0003-2311-6981 (2018) The Sydney Alliance: a broad-based community organising potential for trade union transformation? *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 39 (2). pp. 312-331. ISSN 0143-831X

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X15618451>

(c) 2015, The Author. This is an author produced version of a paper published in *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Sydney Alliance: a broad-based community organising potential for trade union transformation?

Professor Jane Holgate
Professor of Work and Employment Relations
Work and Employment Relations Division
Leeds University Business School
j.holgate@leeds.ac.uk

Abstract

This article reports on a study of trade union involvement in Sydney Alliance—a broad-based community coalition organising for the ‘common good’. The paper explores 3 main issues: the factors motivating unions to get involved in community-based organising; whether unions have the resources and capabilities to maintain long-term involvement with organisations outside the labour movement; and whether or not engagement creates the potential for rethinking union organising. Findings suggest that taking part in Sydney Alliance has created opportunities for unions to reflect and act upon internal organisational change to facilitate revitalisation and member participation; to improve the public image of unions and their engagement with civil society networks; and to counteract the loss of political influence with the Labor Party. At the same time, union contribution to the coalition has also proved difficult to sustain, in the main because of the lack of strategic capability of unions.

Key words:

Community unionism, coalitions, civil society, organisational change, strategic capability, Sydney Alliance, trade unions, union organising.

In September 2011 the Sydney Alliance held its founding assembly at Sydney Town Hall with over 2300 people in attendance from 45 member institutions (10 unions, 18 faith, 17 community). Many of the people in the room had been working together since 2007 to build a broad-based, stable and lasting coalition that could organise around social justice issues considered important to all the groups involved. Hundreds of attendees had built public relationships across the groups through one-to-one meetings; they had held discernment events to decide upon the issues they wanted to campaign around; and they got together in research action teams to work out how to operationalise their demands. The Sydney Alliance sees this model of community organising, where organisational and

institutional power is built before issues are even considered, as paramount. It is the methodological approach taken by the American-based Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), of which the Alliance is part. The IAF arose out of the work of Saul Alinsky, seen by many as the ‘godfather’ of community organising (Alinsky 1972). Much of the theory of today’s community organising has developed from his methods and tactics (Gecan 2004; Osterman 2006; Robinson and Hanna 1994).

Sydney has, over time, seen coalitions come and go, but the intention in this case is that there should be permanence. Instead of ‘event’ or ‘issue’ based coalitions (Levi and Murphy 2006), the Sydney Alliance set out to establish a ‘positive sum’ coalition (Tattersall 2010) based upon a solid foundation of institutions committed to playing a significant role in transforming Sydney’s civic society for the ‘common good’. The distinction here is important as it goes to the heart of how Sydney Alliance distinguishes itself from previous union/community coalition-building. Instead of unions providing *support to*, or asking for *support for* an event or action, the Alliance’s intention is to build *power with* the organisations involved in the coalition. This requires mutual interests, joint decision-making, reciprocal support, and a commitment to building institutional power and a sustainable organisation through lasting relationships. The article seeks to explain the factors leading to trade union involvement in this form of community organising. Why are Sydney unions involved (and why not) and what benefit has it brought them?

After years of decline where next for Australian unions?

After decades of union decline there is no need to repeat the debates and arguments explaining the impact it has had on the union movement in Australia. Other authors have synthesised this material well elsewhere, setting out the current state of Australian industrial relations and the difficulties unions are still facing in demonstrating their relevance to the majority of workers who remain outside the union movement (Bailey and Peetz 2013; Peetz and Bailey 2012; Todd 2013). That said, it is important to restate a few key figures: over 80 per cent of Australian workers are not members of trade unions; union density is lowest in the private sector (12%) where the majority of workers are to be found; and although union density in the public sector was 42 per cent in 2013, this sector is facing increasing attacks on terms and conditions, as well as the loss of significant numbers of jobs (Brace 2013). The latter is currently taking place in the context of the Labor Party’s loss of power at both State level in New South Wales (2011) and at Federal level (2013), increasing the likelihood of even greater job insecurity and precarity.

Given this state of affairs, unions are still searching for an effective response to the crisis facing the union movement and its future sustainability. Whilst the establishment of the Australian Congress of Trade Unions' 1994 'Organising Works' programme assisted a number of unions to adopt a more organising approach (and it is likely things would have been much worse had they not), scholars show that overall trade union membership continued to decline (Carter and Cooper 2002; Peetz and Pocock 2009) and others argue that there is little evidence that it has had any meaningful impact (Bowden 2009). Further, the hostility to unions both from politicians and the media has intensified leading to a relatively weak level of public support for unions (ABC 2014; Cooper and Ellem 2008; Peetz 2002). However, in 2005, the Australian union movement was provided with an 'opportunity' to respond to some of the attacks on workers rights and unions when the Howard government introduced Work Choices—controversial legislation that unions argued removed basic employment rights and dispensed with unfair dismissal laws for some workers.

The Australian Congress of Trade Unions developed a political, industrial *and* community-based strategy (Your Rights at Work) to defeat the Howard government in the Federal election of 2007 in order to get unjust industrial relations laws repealed (Muir 2008). The grass-roots mobilisation of workers, faith groups, community groups and trade unionists was key to the success of the campaign. Yet, once the election was over, unions retreated; they left the community to refocus on the workplace and return to traditional lobbying methods directed to the Labor Party (Ellem 2013). Although the Your Rights at Work (YR@W) campaign signalled a shift in union *strategy* it did not create a *transformation* in union organising behaviour: there was no attempt to leave behind an enduring coalition that could continue to connect (non-unionised) workers with the union movement beyond the campaign. This would have required significant cultural shift in approaches to organising and mobilising workers to keep a focus beyond the workplace and, as Pocock (1998: 20) has noted, unions are exceedingly resistant to change whereby their 'habits have become so solidified that they work against change'—they have a tendency, she says, to 'institutional sclerosis'. Nevertheless, the way in which the YR@W campaign had succeeded in mobilising hundreds of thousands of workers and citizens around that particular issue meant that the value in organising outside the workplace had, at least, been recognised. The sophisticated framing of the labour movement's message that this was an

issue affecting all workers (not just trade union members), and the deep involvement of workers and union members through the community campaign committees and activist networks, was understood to be of immense significance to how the campaign was won (Muir, 2008). Some unions were therefore open to the potential of community-based organising and the opportunities to experiment with contentious politics (Wilson and Spies-Butcher 2011) and, in the case of unions in Sydney, by 2008, seven unions and the peak body, Unions New South Wales, had, according to interviews with union leaders, joined a newly formed broad-based community coalition, Sydney Alliance, with that thought in mind.

Trade unions and community organising

The writing on unions, social movements and community organising is considerable and there is not the space to consider it in-depth here (see Nissen 2004 for an overview of the literature). Suffice to say that many of the scholars writing on trade union renewal have taken the ideas and concepts from social movement theorists (particularly around mobilisation) (Kelly 1998; McAdam 1988; Tilly 1978) and applied it to current understandings of trade union organising. Much of this work begins from an underlying premise that there is inherent conflict between social classes in society. As such, individuals may (or may not) recognise their common interest with others and might, in the right circumstances, decide to collectivise. Social movement theorists have analysed the components necessary for collective action (e.g. interests, opportunity, power, organisation, mobilisation, etc.) and a number of writers on trade unions have focused on some of these issues to understand union behaviour in relation to organising or revitalisation (Cox et al. 2007; Frege and Kelly 2003a; Gall 2005; Heery 2005; Heery and Frege 2006; Simms and Dean 2015; Tapia 2012). It is, however, useful to highlight the main issues and some gaps in the literature relating to trade unions *and* community organising before establishing a framework for analysing the research reported in this paper.

Firstly, it would be remiss to discuss Sydney Alliance without referring to the work of Amanda Tattersall. Tattersall has not only written extensively on union/labour coalitions but she is also the founder and director of Sydney Alliance and is attempting to put her theorisation of community organising into practice. Her research, along with that of others, has focused on the broad factors necessary for successful coalition-building, creating a categorisation from *ad hoc* coalitions to complex integrated deep coalition forms (Fine 2003; Frege et al. 2004; Tattersall 2006; 2009; 2010). The measures of coalition success

identified by Tattersall, which emanate from her three empirical studies, relate to both social change and organisational strength—the latter of which has not received as much attention as perhaps it deserves. It is easy to understand how winning a specific outcome, and shaping the broader political climate can be identified as success (social change), but she also points out that if campaigns are to move beyond *ad hoc* coalitions to deep coalitions, then they have to not only sustain relationships within and between the coalition partners, but also build organisational strength (internal within the coalition partner's organisation, but also within the coalition itself). It is two latter elements that are of particular interest in this paper. Instrumentalism is central to the way most organisations operate and trade unions are no different in this regard. While Frege et al (2003) have noted a type of coalition (integrative) where unions offer unconditional support to campaigns, expecting nothing in return, in reality this is, for most unions, an unlikely strategy. Organising is expensive in terms of time and energy, and resource allocation has to be justified to union executives and members. This will be taken into account when deciding to take part in coalitions—despite any other motivation a union might have for joining. So both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for union involvement in community organising is important, but given the resource considerations mentioned above, the element of, 'what's in it for us?' is of crucial importance to understanding the differences between *ad hoc* and deep coalition-building.

Some of these issues have been considered in more detailed case studies of union involvement in coalition-building in places like the UK, USA and Australia (Fine 2007; AuthorA2009; Author A2014; Nissen 2004; Rittau 2003; Rose 2000; Tapia 2012), While, much of this work has looked at coalitions where there was either a single or couple of unions involved in a particular coalition, and where the focus has been around a specific issue or campaign, what is different about the research in this article is that it is concerned with multi-union involvement in broader-based coalition—where the aim was to 'organise for the common good' and to build a structure to do just that, and where the focus was not on a particular campaign issue. Thus, what is novel here is that the distraction of the 'issue' or campaign is taken out of the analytical equation allowing for a more in-depth focus on other motivating factors for union involvement in community organising. Instead, the processes and mechanisms of joint working comes under closer scrutiny, enabling the research to understand union desire to build *power with* the organisations involved in the

Alliance, rather than unions providing *support to*, or asking for *support for* an event or campaign as has been the case in other case study research.

A framework of analysis: internal challenges to union growth and survival

In their paper on the challenges faced by the Australian union movement since the 1990s Peetz and Bailey (2012) look at the responses to those challenges from external and internal perspectives. External challenges comprise the actions of the state and employers, politics, and the behaviour of the markets. Internal challenges are membership decline (in numbers, density and activity) and union resources (money and members) to respond to the external challenges. The framework of analysis in this paper adopts a similar approach to that of Lévesque and Murray in their study of union power, resources and capabilities for union renewal, (2010) whereby in order to understand in more detail internal union dynamics, the focus remains on the strategic capacity of unions to organise, leaving to one side for the moment the external challenges that may limit that possibility.

Lévesque and Murray call for a testing of the framework they have developed to understand the renewal of unions. They identify four strategic capabilities unions require to build capacity (intermediation, framing, learning and articulation). While sufficient and appropriate resources are needed, alone these are not sufficient. It is essential, they argue, to focus also ‘on the capability of union leaders and activist to develop, use and transform those resources as required by the circumstances they face’ (p341). So, firstly, unions need the ability to mediate between the different and contending interests within their organisation, to activate social networks within the union, and to foster collaborative action through identifying and nurturing relationships. Secondly, the ability to frame issues in such a way that union interest is also ‘common interest’—i.e. it is part of a broader social project—is key to widening collaboration. Thirdly, learning has several dimensions; the ability to learn from the past and to adapt to changed/changing circumstances, but also the ability to diffuse this learning throughout the union. As Hyman (2007) has also noted: learning is an essential element of adaption and innovation, without it the tendency is to rely on ‘existing repertoires of action’ even when these are no-longer appropriate. Fourthly, articulation refers to an understanding of the different scales at which action might take place and how these relate to each other. The ability to articulate an understanding of how power resides in different places and at different times is essential in developing an effective strategic capability.

As the research in this paper is concerned with the factors motivating unions to get involved in community-based organising and whether unions have the resource and capability to maintain long-term involvement with community organisations, Lévesque and Murray's framework is a useful tool and will assist with the analysis of the data relating to unions involved in the Sydney Alliance. But before moving on to look at the findings, it is important to provide some information on the methods used to collect the data.

The research approach: watching, listening and analysing

A multi-method qualitative approach was adopted mainly using one-to-one interviews, participant observation and analysis of internal documentation. Participant observation was used to note the interactions between members of the different groups—an essential method in this case because 'relational action' was central to Sydney Alliance's organising approach—a concept quite alien to trade unions in the coalition. A key tenet of IAF methodology is its form of relational meetings: these are purposeful one-to-one meetings with other members of the group where organisers and leaders are taught to run listening campaigns and to assess the potential of individuals to become leaders. It is this form of community organising—relationship-building for permanent alliances—that differs from that of trade union approaches where the focus is much more on issues and campaigning. The participant observation was, therefore, important to get a feel for the way the organisation did business—its culture, organising methods, democracy, the involvement of the different parties and how they related to each other. The observation involved 3 weeks in Sydney working from the Sydney Alliance office where I attended meetings and observed the founding assembly in 2011. Details were recorded in a research diary and photographs were taken at events.

The majority of the interviews were undertaken from February 2011 to July 2012—although follow up interviews with key respondents were conducted in early 2014. In total, 55 interviews have been undertaken with 35 individuals. Thirty interviewees were from Sydney Alliance member organisations (faith (5), unions (16) NGOs (4) and staff (5), and the remaining five were leaders from unions that had not joined the Alliance. Thirty-two of the 35 interviewees identified as trade unionists and 15 as either belonging to a faith organisation or identifying as having a faith (11 of whom were trade unionists). Interviews were undertaken with senior figures from each of the unions involved (see Table 1)—and in some cases other staff and lay members of the union as well, and a number of unions that were not involved. Most of the interviews have taken place via

video link, using Skype, except the ones when I was in Sydney and these were face-to-face.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Thirty-eight hours of interview data were recorded, transcribed and coded according to the main issues arising from the research questions. Nvivo was used to organise data and identify themes for further analysis. Through repeat readings of transcripts and Nvivo data an iterative process was used for analysis which then showed patterns of similarity and differences in understandings of community organising, its potential for developing new union organising approaches and motivation for involvement. Thoughts and ideas were memoed as they evolved throughout the study—an open process that was later refined to focus on emerging core concepts. Integrative sessions were used to share ideas with research participants via follow up interviews to increase insight and a report on the research was submitted to all interviewees prior to many of the second interviews and in most cases formed part of our discussions (AuthorA2013). In addition to the formal interviews, I linked up with (‘friended’) around 15 of the interviewees and the Sydney Alliance using social media (Facebook and Twitter). This way I could observe their interactions and conversations about Sydney Alliance over the last few of years. These methods have allowed me to follow events as they are taking place and to ask questions using social media and receive clarification about on-going Sydney Alliance activity in follow up interviews.

The list of unions that are/have been members of Sydney Alliance are listed in Table 2.

INSERT TABEL 2 HERE

Unions in Sydney: responding to a hostile political and economic environment

In each interview union leaders¹ were asked about motivation for involvement (or not) in Sydney Alliance. Responses were often specific to individual unions and the particular difficulties they were facing, but most often, the current hostile political and economic climate for Australian unions was the first point of discussion. Unions in Australia have been facing a hostile climate for some time but not just in the political sphere; a number of employers had also taken aggressive anti-union stances most notably in the docks and the construction industry where there have been high profile disputes (Dabscheck 2000;

Mackinnon 2009; Wiseman 1998). This overarching issue is one that has given unions cause to consider the future and their ability to make a difference to their members' terms and conditions. The successful, Your Rights at Work campaign was raised by most interviewees as a marker for changing union attitudes to community organising and behaviour towards working with other organisations/individuals outside the union movement. While there has been some critique as to the extent of the genuine community engagement in the campaign (Ellem et al. 2008), there is no doubt that unions operated *in the community* (through community campaign committees organised by full-time ACTU community campaign organisers in marginal seats), and the potential of mobilising communities in this way had been recognised as having value by many union leaders.

The long history of institutional links with the Australian Labor Party had meant unions had come to rely on the relationships that had once helped them to secure rights and protection for workers, but making deals at state and federal levels were now either not possible due to a change in government or could no longer be relied upon as Labor adopted an increasing neoliberal agenda. As such, involvement in the Sydney Alliance had become apposite:

This idea of building longer-term relationships for our nurses, for our transport unions, for our teachers, for our council unions, for us in our public unions, has really sort of landed at the right time...so, all of this, means that the argument [for joining Sydney Alliance] resonates. The idea of building and talking to faith leaders and community leaders and talking about what we have in common and running broad-based campaigns actually has a base. The question, the challenge, is what priority is that given? [Union leader, UNSW]

It was immediately evident from opening discussions on motivation that the elements of Lévesque and Murray's strategic capabilities for union renewal were being raised, if not directly articulated in the form they set out. The UNSW leader summarised the overall perspective on unions working in coalitions, but also voiced the important question of what priority unions might give to actually making this work—a matter returned to later in this paper.

Reframing the message of union organising: bringing in the community

During its formation phase Sydney Alliance spent a long time in discussions with coalition partners, listening to the issues around which they wanted to organise. These needed to be mutual issues coalescing around what it termed ‘the common good’ in order to attract the broadest support. These were then framed in such a way that each party felt that their organisation’s members would be able to support the campaign, but this also impacted on unions in a different way.

One of the key issues that arose in Sydney Alliance’s city wide listening campaign amongst its 45 member organisations, where thousands of people were spoken to about their concerns about civic life in Sydney, was that of public transport. The campaign that arose out of this process was called 400:15:1 SCA², which translates into transport should be within 400 meters, should come every 15 minutes, requires just one ticket and should be safe, clean, accessible and affordable. For the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, one of the founder members of Sydney Alliance, this campaign is close to its heart and its members’ concerns. It also provided an opportunity to reframe the union’s message about investment in transport infrastructure as a community-wide issue. The benefit this kind of community organising, whereby the union can develop links with the traveling public and other influential civic society organisations, was important for a union like the RTBU.

This was also the case with the New South Wales Nurse and Midwives’ Union, also a founder member of the coalition. The union has struggled to find effective ways to express union concerns about working conditions and levels of nursing care especially as its members are reluctant to take industrial action. Without this traditional industrial relations remedy, the union recognised it needs to find other ways and means of getting its voice heard and acted upon. A NSWNMU leader recounted a conversation with a community organiser from Sydney Alliance where they reformulated ways of getting union issues heard in a wider sphere:

He said, think of the power of sitting at the table with a politician, having beside you faith groups and community groups—people who are not ever expected to agree, and who are usually pitted against each other. And then saying, ‘we have a platform, we know what we want you to do’. And clearly the consequences of not doing that [the politician is faced with] very strong allied group of people—not just ones that can be tagged as unionists. (NSWNMU, interviewee 1)

An interviewee from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) spoke about how his union has felt constantly under attack from the state, politicians and the media for many years since the Howard Government initiated the Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry in 2001 and the Australian Building and Construction Commission was established in its wake. For this union, a key, motivating factor for involvement in Sydney Alliance was the opportunity to present an alternative message:

Our union has a stigma attached to it that we're a male dominated, very blokey union, that we are bovver boys and we're bullies, and that's completely untrue...But there's a lot of propaganda that gets put out there and I think that simply by our involvement with the softer touch, I guess with the faith groups and the community groups and Sydney Alliance, I think that's a better outcome for us. (CFMEU, interviewee)

Clearly, being part of Sydney Alliance provided the opportunity for unions demonstrate that they could be part of a much broader social model and build capacity for organising, but to what extent was there evidence that any of this impacted on any form of organisational or cultural change within the unions? Beyond the reframing of union issues, did the unions have the other strategic capabilities required to increase organising capacity in their organisations? The next section will look at these in turn.

Learning as a means of cultural/organisational change

Richard Hyman (2001) has written about how unions face in three directions, located as they are somewhere between market, class and society. Precisely where they are situated within this triangle provides us with an understanding of a union's ideology—be that focusing on the market (in the case of business unionism), or class divisions and the way to fundamentally challenge the market (radical oppositional unions), or where the focus is to function within a particular social framework co-existing with other civil society organisations (integrative unions). A union's orientation will reflect both material circumstances and a union's own ideological traditions. It is these, says Hyman (2001; 5), that give a union its identity:

In times of change and challenge for union movements, a reorientation can occur: with the third, hitherto largely neglected, dimension in the geometry of trade unionism perhaps exerting greater influence. This indeed is a major explanation of the dynamic character of trade union identities and ideology.

This is useful in exploring different union responses to Sydney Alliance. What influence has the Alliance had in allowing the space for unions to reconsider where their focus is in relation to Hyman's framework? Has the training created a cultural change such that unions are more able to co-exist with other civil society organisations? A CFMEU leader felt that involvement in Sydney Alliance had the potential to strengthen the internal organisation of the union by using the coalition's training to develop its own members and officials as more effective leaders who would then be in a position to effect cultural change within the union. The CFMEU had used the idea of 'listening campaigns' and relational organising with its officials during a process of leadership change within the union to help strengthen the message the leadership wanted to impart, but also to strengthen the union's internal organisation:

I honestly think that, it's only early days yet but I think that the Alliance has boundless givings for the trade union movement...we decided that we would use the listening campaign technique for our officials...I think one of the aspects that doesn't get enough air play about the Sydney Alliance is in the relational technique, and that you can actually first of all strengthen your own organisation internally. (CFMEU, interviewee)

This is a key objective of Sydney Alliance: by strengthening the organising capacity of civil society organisations, through rethinking their strategic capabilities, the aim is to make them more able to mobilise their members and find new leaders who in turn then strengthen the collective power of the coalition overall. This is a deep learning process undertaken through a specific education and training programme. However, change in trade unions tends not to happen quickly. Trade union leaders are apt to use the metaphor of an oil tanker changing direction when talking about how difficult it is to effect large-scale organisational change within their unions and this view was also reflected in conversations with a number of interviewees.

It is generally accepted that commitment to leadership development and organisational and cultural change has to be driven from the top to have any chance of success—and that this takes time—but also change must be accepted and acted upon at all levels of an organisation to be truly effective or transformational. As such, levels of leadership and institutional 'buy-in' made a significant difference to the depth of union involvement in Sydney Alliance and this varied considerably in the eight unions in membership and

depended considerably on the extent to which union leaders had taken part in Sydney Alliance training and were then able to lead organisational and cultural change.

For the New South Wales Teachers Federation (a union member of Sydney Alliance for three years but left after the founding assembly) participation required a big shift in the union's culture, from its formal bureaucratic meetings with motions to one that was more informal and relational such that it was able to work collaboratively using consensus with other (non-union) partners in the coalition. It seems Sydney Alliance was 'too abstract' for many in this union and it did not have the level of necessary commitment from its leadership and other layers within the union to play a full part. Around 20 officers had been on Sydney Alliance two-day training and while some were enthusiastic about the potential, more immediate work issues took prominence:

...in general they're enthusiastic, but again, it comes back to just what they're used to in experience in terms of campaigning. They're used to the way unions campaign as opposed to the broad coalitions. And it's also a matter of fitting in with their work schedule, because you've got your union telling you that you need to be out on this particular education campaign and it limits the time you can put into the broad coalition campaigning. (NSWTF interviewee)

One of the unions that is perhaps most engaged with Sydney Alliance is United Voice, a large private sector union covering some of the lowest paid workers in cleaning, childcare and property services. It has been involved since 2006 in a campaign called Clean Start to organise better wages and conditions for cleaners in the office cleaning industry and has used some community organising methods in its campaign. One union leader from United Voice explained that joining Sydney Alliance had opened the union's eyes to what was possible and how it might become more of an 'integrative union' and improve its Clean Start campaign. United Voice NSW was one of the founding members of Sydney Alliance and the union has committed considerable financial (\$40k per year in the first few years) and human resource to getting it off the ground. Senior staff within the union have played a leading role in the Alliance since its formation, running meetings, delivering training programmes and taking part in its leadership council. In addition, most staff (and some members) have undertaken Sydney Alliance 2-day training programmes (some have done the 6-day training) to acculturise trade unionists into the ideology and methodology of community organising. The leadership of the union see

this as ‘a great opportunity to reinvigorate the social movement origins of the union’ and the community organising training was central to trying to achieve this.

The union’s leadership and organisers have attempted to take what they have learnt from their involvement with Sydney Alliance to begin a significant cultural shift within the union. While United Voice considered itself an ‘organising union’, campaigns and meetings were mainly officer-led and sometimes with little member involvement. Sydney Alliance’s methodology of listening campaigns, use of testimony and relational organising—was adopted by the union and taken into its campaigns to really engage with the issues workers most cared about and were actually prepared to act upon² and to get them to lead campaigns. While on the surface, this might not appear particularly radical, union organisers told how, using community organising methods from the training, they had learnt a lot about their members and their members’ concerns—which were not necessarily those that union organisers thought would be key issues around which to organise.

Before, we never gave people an opportunity to say those things and get involved. So they were talking about travel, transport and safety; so not feeling safe enough to be able to go and use the streets. Just [allowing them space] to have a debate amongst themselves around something within their local community to me was really powerful...So a lot of issues came through [the listening campaigns] around age care and childcare and it just started to paint this picture of a much broader group. That was exciting. (United Voice, interviewee 2)

While the CFMEU leader interviewed had a similar vision for the union to that of United Voice, he, like the NSWTF interviewee, spoke about the difficulties of getting buy-in adopted at higher and lower levels of the union hierarchy due to competing priorities and levels of commitment to the practices necessary for community coalition-building. Although most of the union’s officials had been through Sydney Alliance, it had not had the same impact as at United Voice. In the CFMEU, involvement was largely driven by one committed individual leader, but with little support from the grass roots or the higher leadership. As such, by the time of the second interview 30 months after the first, this leader had moved on. Given that he was the only person immersed in the Sydney Alliance there was no one to take on his role that was capable of or willing to build a strong cadre of union members who understood the purpose and rationale for the union’s involvement. Overall, there was little change to union identity or ideological perspective as a result of

taking part in the Sydney Alliance. If we were to consider union involvement in the context of Hyman's (2001) framework the conclusion would be that there was less of a pull towards the societal dimension than the competing elements of market and class.

Mediating between different and contending interests

The determination of issues or campaigns on which Sydney Alliance focuses is carried out by member organisations through listening campaigns. A series of one-to-one meetings are undertaken with an organisation's members and these are fed into meetings of the coalition where a discernment process takes place to decide the issues most widely and deeply felt, and where there is a good chance of achieving a result. One leader from the Public Services Association (PSA) described how the relational approach was, in many ways, counter-cultural for the union. The PSA began a listening campaign asking members about their hopes and dreams for their community and society, and what pressures they face in everyday life. The PSA leader described the process as 'fascinating'. At first members responded by saying 'why are you asking me these questions' and 'this is a waste of time', but these attitudes shifted in the course of the meeting to, 'this is amazing that my union is asking me these questions'. It also led to the identifying of leaders who, in other circumstances, may not have come to the fore;

It's not the people you imagine because it's the people that then start to tell you about their multiple caring responsibilities and the story of their lives. People who then start to emerge using this model of community organising, rather than the delegate that puts their hands up and is willing to go and sit down with the boss. It's a very different type of person. So even though it's a very small group of people who went through that listening campaign—probably 50 all up— but 2 or 3 quality leaders came out of that and, to me, it was enough to see within our organisation that the model works. (PSA, interviewee)

Despite this particular view it appears it was still too counter-cultural, time consuming and resource intensive for the some in the PSA's leadership and, as such, the union withdrew from Sydney Alliance in 2011. However, since then, and with a new leadership in place, the PSA re-joined with the hope that they can re-engage new layers of officers and members in the coalition, but left again in 2014. What this highlights though is that, in order to mediate between the different and contending interests within organisations, organisational learning is necessary to diffuse organisational and cultural change and it needs effective and supportive leadership in order to make this happen.

Articulation: where power resides

The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) is not part of the Alliance³ but began working with the coalition in late 2012 when concerns about retail workers being forced to work public holidays meshed. The New South Wales government was proposing new laws that would have seen workers forced to work on Boxing Day. Sydney Alliance joined with SDA's 'Take the Time' campaign bringing some of its member organisations from faith communities to speak out against the proposed new laws. In the past, the union most likely would have turned to the Australian Labor Party (to which it is affiliated) to lobby for support, but with the Labor Party out of power, and also no longer able to guarantee support for workers' rights, the union needs other political allies who hold the reigns of power. Together, the union and Sydney Alliance were able to develop a scalar strategy to demonstrate multi-levels of broad-based community support for keeping public holidays, from grass roots members to leaders of regional organisations. Faith leaders and members of congregations, whose aims match that of the SDA on this issue, came together to organise a meeting with the NSW Treasurer to discuss this issue. Through a combination of a top down/bottom up strategy Sydney Alliance and the union identified where and when they could best influence the leavers of power by taking a mix of community leaders to the meeting. As Amanda Tattersall, director of Sydney Alliance, explained:

It was a very interesting meeting. As community organisers, the Sydney Alliance tells stories and asks lots of questions. At that meeting the Treasurer shared his own stories of working in retail when he was young, and how hard it was for him to negotiate time off. In the meeting he expressed genuine concern for this issue...20 minutes before our Work/Life Balance forum with Rev. Nile [the Christian Democrat leader in the NSW Legislative Council] was due to start, the Treasurer called the Sydney Alliance and told us that he was going to pull the legislation from the Parliament (Tattersall 2012).

In interviewees with union leaders following this campaign success, it was accepted that the parties acting alone would have made success more difficult. The multi-scalar approach of bringing together of religious and community partners, and leaders from different levels of their organisations, once again provided this union with the broad community support that allowed for a reframing of workers' issues as more than self-interest—these were concerns of a much wider populous such that it could be presented as a common concern for the

community as well as the union. Also, correctly identifying how to articulate this strategy and bring together the strategic capabilities of each organisation provided the union and Sydney Alliance with the leverage they needed to make this work.

Discussion and concluding remarks

One of the key questions in this research was what was the motivation of unions for their involvement in community organising, and in particular, Sydney Alliance? Union leaders were unanimous in explaining that antagonism from the state, employers, and the media, as well as a decrease in political legitimacy, were the main factors causing them to look for new alliances. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this resonates with the research by Peetz and Bailey (2012) who show unions have still to devise an effective strategy to counteract these attacks. The YR@W campaign had a significant influence on the way some union leaders had started to think about the potential in community-based organising. Although there was an understanding that the YR@W campaign had come to a natural end with the defeat of the Howard government, there was recognition that retreat back to the workplace meant a loss of community presence for unions. In addition, those unions that had a willingness to engage in community organising did not necessarily have the internal strategic capabilities to push such an agenda forward. The founding of Sydney Alliance not only provided a community-organising learning process to build this capacity, but it also had the backing (both financially and ideologically) of Unions New South Wales that gave it a degree of credibility as an organisation friendly to union interests.

This peak level support for Sydney Alliance encouraged union leaders to make the decision to join as member organisations, but what was lacking, in most cases, was support from union members. This was problematic in a number of ways. Firstly, what Sydney Alliance requires from its member organisations is the identification of mutual interests, joint decision-making, reciprocal support, and a commitment to building institutional power and a sustainable organisation through lasting relationships. In order to do this, union members needed to be *actively* involved at all levels of Sydney Alliance on a regular basis—and this is time-consuming. But without it, unions could come to be seen as peripheral members contributing only positional leadership and finance through membership dues, and this was case in a number of unions. While all unions were able to turn out members for the founding assembly, this was not sustained for on-going Alliance activity—they were less able to play a reciprocal role when campaigns were not as directly relevant to work-related

matters. In many cases, unions were not as concerned with the ideal of the ‘common good’ than the faith or NGO partners in the coalition.

As a result this led to some union members questioning their belonging to the Alliance, particularly in terms of finance, but also in terms of relevance (‘what’s in it for us?’). Annual dues require a substantial financial outlay for member organisations: in the 2012-2013 financial year the 50 partner organisations contributed at total of \$389, 233 in dues—calculated on the basis of each organisation’s membership. United Voice, for example, paid \$40k per year in the first few years, and unions, as organisations with sizable membership, would also have paid a greater share of the total than the smaller NGO community groups. Using Lévesque and Murray’s term, one of the four pillars of strategic capability that are central to union capacity-building, that of ‘intermediation’—the necessary ability to mediate between different and contending interests in unions—was not evident in most cases. It was seen to some extent in United Voice, which had attempted cultural and organisational change within the union by adopting Sydney Alliance community organising methods to engage more directly with their members. This was done mainly through listening campaigns and educating staff and members in community organising theory and practice, but not in a few of the other unions.

In United Voice it provided possibilities for rethinking union organising and a community organising approach, and was instigated in the Clean Start campaign. The RTBU and the CFMEU had also grasped the community organising potential of framing issues such that union interest was identified as ‘common interest’, and that working with other civil society partners made members’ concerns part of a broader social project (Hyman’s ‘integrative unionism’). Yet weak leadership support for Sydney Alliance meant that RTBU and the CFMEU (and some of the other unions in Sydney Alliance) did not have the institutional strategic capability to convince their leaders/members to adopt new approaches to organising. Learning the theory and practice of community organising (particularly the focus on building institutional power) was for many union members too time-consuming. The process of building Sydney Alliance has been deliberately slow in order to develop strong and lasting relationships in the coalition. This slow burn development process is quite challenging, particularly for trade unions that tend to be fairly reactive organisations, and it was here that the external challenges faced by unions led to some internal contradictions that were not easily resolved. For example, the focus on relational-

organising with its thousands of one-to-one meetings, discernment and assemblies is counter-cultural for many trade unionists who are more used to officer-led, procedural and bureaucratic meetings and campaigns. A combination of these factors has led to some unions rejecting involvement with Sydney Alliance out of hand—it is too slow, too inward-focused and has little to show (campaign-wise) for its six years of intensive work. Union money it is claimed could be better spent on campaigns led by unions themselves. There was also a little nervousness around these issues from some of the unions who *had* joined Sydney Alliance. While individual leaders were committed to their union's involvement, there was some push back from different parts of the union who expressed similar sentiments to those critics from unions outside the coalition. Keeping other union leaders and members on board over the six years has been difficult for a few of the unions and, in some cases, it has not been possible. As such, a number of unions have either left (IEU, NSWIF, NUW, PSA), or have a, or *ad hoc*, shallow involvement.

Sydney Alliance's community organising training programme had been undertaken by almost all interviewees and some union leaders were incorporating skills they had learnt in an attempt to implement organisational and cultural change within their unions. In several cases this was small scale such as key organising staff being sent on Sydney Alliance training and for others, like United Voice, it was more fundamental, where the union had adopted the methodology of community organising in their trade union organising practice. However, in terms of union benefit from involvement in Sydney Alliance change to internal organisational practice should not be overstated. As noted earlier, unions are slow to respond to changes to practice and culture and, while many leaders interviewed perceived the benefit of using the community organising methods practiced by Sydney Alliance, in most cases this potential was far from being realised. All interviewees had concerns over the issue of work priorities—the old unresolved arguments about the push and pull of servicing members and organising members to service themselves.

A number of industrial relations scholars have noted the critical importance of learning in the process of union renewal (Frege and Kelly 2003b; Mustchin 2012; Shelly and Calvey 2007) and Lévesque and Murray (2010: 344) have argued that if a union does not have learning capacity then it will 'remain a prisoner of its own history, caught in a path of dependency of its repertoires and identities: it will likely to follow a trajectory that will not challenge its projects, values and traditions.' Learning from the past and instigating cultural

and organisational change to adapt to changing circumstances is a challenge for many unions. Their ideologies, cultures, structures, and practices are deeply and historically embedded, and change requires leadership that can mediate between the contending and competing interests within the organisation—and then carry the new direction forward. In terms of focus, then, unions remained, in Hyman's (2001) framework, closer to market and class, than society. In many ways, other civil society organisations, particularly the faith groups, did not face the same challenges as the union members of Sydney Alliance and they were able to prioritise their Sydney Alliance work in the way that unions felt unable.

The form of broad-based community organising as practiced by Sydney Alliance is very resource intensive and requires a considerable internal cultural shift within unions. At the current stage, involvement in the coalition is largely led by already overworked union officials who have competing demands on their time: unions have yet to make the transition from this stage to that where union members are the key players organising their own communities, wherever/whatever they might be. Most unions joining Sydney Alliance never really accounted for the big shift in internal change needed to make their involvement work for them leading some to drop out, finding easier and more comfortable to return to their trusted ways of organising. Many unions do not have the capacity or inclination for the type of transformative internal organisational change necessary to respond to the external challenges written about by Peetz and Bailey (2012). The 'institutional sclerosis' of many unions remains a major barrier preventing an internal response to the external challenges they face.

While Sydney Alliance is still at an early stage of development—especially in community-organising terms—and it has yet to show any large-scale significant wins in the way that its sister organisation in the UK has done in terms of creating a national debate around the concept of a living wage, and its USA counterparts have done in terms of creating green jobs for unionised buildings trade workers (AuthorA 2014)—it is showing the potential benefits for union/community collaborations. The link-up between the shop workers union, the SDA, and the Sydney Alliance over the saving of the Boxing Day holiday, while only a small win, shows the potential of the reframing of union messages and having powerful allies to help deliver that message. While some sceptics in the union movement may feel that the jury is still out on whether this form of community organising can be of benefit to the trade union movement, Peetz and Baily (2012: 536) predict that, 'as the logic

of financialization breaks down the power of labour and breaks up communities, the emergence of this potential mechanism [the Sydney Alliance] for unifying labour and elements of civil society may turn out to be the most important development for unions since the launch of the YR@W campaign.’ The question remains however whether unions, as they are currently constituted, have the strategic capabilities for the organisational and cultural change that is required to build increased capacity, to adapt to changed and changing circumstances, and to rebuild union power. This may require a fundamental rethinking of where issues of common concern are to be found and with whom alliances are built to enhance power to challenge the seemingly unstoppable power of employers and the state in this period of neoliberalism.

Table 1: Individuals interviewed from Sydney Unions

Union	Interviewees X number of interviews
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union	1x1
Australian Services Union	1x1
Australian Workers Union	1x1
CFMEU Construction	1x2
Finance Services Union	1x1, 1x2
National Tertiary Education Union	1x1, 1x1
National Union of Workers	1x1
New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association	1x3
New South Wales Teachers Federation	1x1, 1x1
Public Service Association	1x2
Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union	1x1
Unions New South Wales	1x2
United Services Union	1x2
United Voice	1x3, 1x2, 1x1, 1x1, 1x1

Table 2: List of unions that have been members of the Sydney Alliance

Prior to founding	At Founding	
2008-2011	September 15 2011	01 April 2014
Independent Education Union (IEU) [^]		
	CFMEU Construction	CFMEU Construction
	National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)	National Tertiary Education Union
National Union of Workers (NUW)	National Union of Workers *	
	New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association	New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association
New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF)	New South Wales Teachers Federation*	
Public Service Association (PSA)	Public Service Association*	Public Service Association (rejoined 2013, but left again by June 2014.)
Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union (RTBU)	Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union	Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union
Unions New South Wales (UNSW) [±]	Unions New South Wales	Unions New South Wales
United Services Union (USU)	United Services Union	United Services Union
United Voice	United Voice	United Voice

[^] This union was only a member of Sydney Alliance for a short while in the very early days.

[±] Unions NSW provided the initial seed funding to fund two organisers to establish Sydney Alliance

* These unions left Sydney Alliance shortly after the founding assembly

References

- ABC (2014) 'ACTU secretary attacks royal commission into corruption.'
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/actu-secretary-dave-oliver/5248638>. Australian Broadcasting Commission.
- Alinsky, S. (1972) *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*. New York: Vintage.
- Bailey, J. and Peetz, D. (2013) 'Unions and collective bargaining in Australia in 2012'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 55 (3): 403-420.
- Bowden, B. (2009) 'The organising model in Australia: a reassessment'. *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work*. 20 (2): 138-158.
- Brace, S.-A. (2013) 'Queensland government redundancies: Harsh realities of reform'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 55 (3): 425-429.
- Carter, B. and Cooper, R. (2002) 'The organising model and the management of change: a comparative study of unions in Australia and Britain'. *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*. 54 (4): 712-742.
- Cooper, R. and Ellem, B. (2008) 'The Neoliberal State, Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining in Australia'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 46 (3): 532-554.
- Cox, A., Sung, S., Hebson, G. and Oliver, G. (2007) 'Applying Union Mobilisation Theory to Explain Gendered Collective Grievances: Two UK Case Studies'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 49 (5): 717-739.
- Dabscheck, B. (2000) 'The Australian Waterfront Dispute and Theories of the State'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 42 (4): 497-516.
- Ellem, B. (2013) 'Peak Union Campaigning: Fighting for Rights at Work in Australia'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 51 (2): 264-287.
- Ellem, B., Oxenbridge, S. and Gahan, B. (2008) 'The Fight of our Lives: An Evaluation of Unions NSW and the Your Rights at Work Campaign.' Sydney: Unions NSW
- Fine, J. (2003) 'Community Unions in Baltimore and Long Island: Beyond the Politics of Particularism. PhD dissertation.' *Department of Political Science*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Fine, J. (2007) 'A marriage made in heaven? Mismatch and misunderstanding between workers centres and unions'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 45 (2): 335-360.
- Frege, C., Heery, E. and Turner, L. (2003) 'Comparative coalition building and the revitalization of the labor movement.' *Industrial Relations Research Association Conference*. Washington, DC.
- Frege, C., Heery, E. and Turner, L. (2004) 'The new solidarity? Trade union coalition building in five countries.' in Frege, C. and Kelly, J. (eds.) *Varieties of Unionism: Strategies for Union Revitalization in a Globalizing Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 137-158.
- Frege, C. and Kelly, J. (2003a) 'Union Revitalization Strategies'. *Comparative Perspective European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 9 (1): 7-24.
- Frege, C.M. and Kelly, J. (2003b) 'Union Revitalization Strategies in Comparative Perspective'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. 9 (1): 7-24.
- Gall, G. (2005) *Union Recognition: Organising and Bargaining Outcomes*. London: Routledge.
- Gecan, M. (2004) *Going Public: An Inside Story of Disrupting Politics as Usual*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Griffin, G. (2005) 'Australia: top-down strategic restructuring.' in Waddington, J. (ed.) *Restructuring Reorientation: The Merger Process and Trade Union Structural Development in Ten Countries*. Brussels: PIE-Peter Lang: 45-66.
- Heery, E. (2005) 'The British Journal of Industrial Relations: Position and Prospect'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 43 (1): 1-9.

- Heery, E. and Frege, C. (2006) 'New Actors in Industrial Relations'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 44 (4): 601-604.
- Hyman, R. (2001) *Understanding European Trade Unionism: Between Market, Class and Society*. London: Sage.
- Hyman, R. (2002) 'The future of unions'. *Just Labour*. Vol. 1: pp.7-15.
- Hyman, R. (2007) 'How can trade unions act strategically?'. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*. 13 (2): 193-210.
- Kelly, J. (1998) *Rethinking Industrial Relations. MobilizMobilisation, Collectivism and Long Waves*. London: Routledge.
- Lévesque, C. and Murray, G. (2010) 'Understanding union power: resources and capabilities for renewing union capacity'. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*. 16 (3): 333-350.
- Levi, M. and Murphy, G.H. (2006) 'Coalitions of Contention: The Case of the WTO Protests in Seattle'. *Political Studies*. 54 (4): 651-670.
- Mackinnon, B.H. (2009) 'CRA/Rio unto in the 1990s: A Decade of Deunionisation'. *Labour History*. 97: 75-96.
- McAdam, D. (1988) 'Micro-mobilizmobilisation contexts and recruitment to activism'. *International Social Movement Research*. 1: 125-154.
- Muir, K. (2008) *Worth Fighting for: Inside the Your Rights at Work Campaign*. Sydney: UNSW Press.
- Mustchin, S. (2012) 'Unions, learning, migrant workers and union revitalization in Britain'. *Work, Employment & Society*. 26 (6): 951-967.
- Nissen, B. (2004) 'The effectiveness and limits of labor-community coalitions: evidence from south Florida'. *Labor Studies Journal*. 29 (1): 67-89.
- Osterman, P. (2006) 'Community organizorganising and employee representation'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 44 (4): 629-649.
- Peetz, D. (2002) 'Sympathy for the Devil?: Australian Unionism and Public Opinion'. *Australian Journal of Political Science*. 37 (1): 57-80.
- Peetz, D. and Bailey, J. (2012) 'Dancing Alone: The Australian Union movement over three decades'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 54 (4): 525-541.
- Peetz, D. and Pocock, B. (2009) 'An analysis of workplace representatives, union power and democracy in Australia'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 47 (4): 623-652.
- Pocock, B. (1998) 'Institutional sclerosis: Prospects for trade union transformation.'. *Labour and Industry*. Vol.9. No.1. pp.17-36.
- Rittau, Y. (2003) 'Regional Labour Councils, Local Employment Generation and Labour-Community Coalitions'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 45 (3): 395-400.
- Robinson, B. and Hanna, M. (1994) 'Lessons for Academics for Grassroots Community OrganizOrganising: A Case Study—The Industrial Areas Foundation'. *Journal of Community Practice*. 1 (4): 63-94.
- Rose, F. (2000) *Coalitions Across the Class Divide. Lessons from the Labor, Peace and Environmental Movements*. Ithaca: IPR Press.
- Shelly, S. and Calveley, M. (2007) *Learning with Trade Unions: A Contemporary Agenda in Employment Relations*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Simms, M. and Dean, D. (2015) 'Mobilising contingent workers: An analysis of two successful cases'. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. 36 (1): 173-190.
- Tapia, M. (2012) 'Marching to different tunes: commitment and culture as mobilizmobilising mechanisms of trade unions and community organizorganisations'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*.
- Tattersall, A. (2006) 'Bringing the community in: possibilities for public sector union success through community unionism'. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. 6 (2/3/4): 186.

- Tattersall, A. (2009) 'A little help from our friends. Exploring and understanding when labor-community coalitions are likely to form'. *Labor Studies Journal*. 34 (4): 485-506.
- Tattersall, A. (2010) *Power in Coalition: Strategies for Strong Unions and Social Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Tattersall, A. (2012) 'Boxing Day saved – What's next for Sydney's Empowered Civil Society?'. <http://www.sydneyalliance.org.au/news/2012/11/15/boxing-day-saved-whats-next-for-sydneys-empowered-civil-society/>: [Last accessed 24 April 2014].
- Tilly, C. (1978) *From Mobilisation to Revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Todd, P. (2013) 'Introduction: Australian industrial relations in 2012'. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 55 (3): 311-320.
- Waddington, J. (2006) 'The trade union merger process in Europe: defensive adjustment or strategic reform?'. *Industrial Relations Journal*. 37 (6): 630-651.
- Wilson, S. and Spies-Butcher, B. (2011) 'When Labour Makes a Difference: Union Mobilisation and the 2007 Federal Election in Australia'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 49: s306-s331.
- Wiseman, J. (1998) 'Here to Stay? The 1997–1998 Australian Waterfront Dispute and Its Implications'. *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work*. 9 (1): 1-16.

Jane Holgate is Professor of Work and Employment Relations at Leeds University Business School. Her research interests include trade unions, equality, migration and community organising. She is an executive member of the British Universities Industrial Relations Association.

¹ In this paper when using the term 'union leader' I am using this in a generic sense. In some cases this may be the most senior person in the union/branch and in others it may be a deputy/assistant or other person with some authority—I do not make any distinction in this paper as I have provided anonymity in order to encourage interviewees to be open in their views and comments.

² Another union, not part of the Sydney Alliance, although supportive of its activity, had also adopted a similar approach: 'We've adopted a lot of the Sydney Alliance organising methodology internally as part of our organising approach. I'm certainly an advocate of the relational organising approach so we've launched internal organising training programmes that are centred on some of those ideas' [Anonymous union, interview with senior leader].

³ The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) while not a member of the Sydney Alliance does have a Memorandum of Understanding about how they will work together and makes a donation to the coalition in line with what would be expected from membership.