

Security for Dairy workers

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Union members in Victoria's dairy industry can look forward to healthy pay rises and improved shift arrangements thanks to a new three-year deal struck by the National Union of Workers.

One thousand workers at Murray Goulburn Co-operative – most of whom are union members – will receive a 12% pay rise over three years. Murray Goulburn, famous for its Devondale brand of products, has workplaces in several regional centres and Melbourne and workers across all sites have been united in their recent wages campaign in an environment when many workers were losing hard won conditions because of WorkChoices.

“This agreement was negotiated while WorkChoices was still in place and we were able to improve conditions. We achieved this result due to the commitment and strength of the members across all sites,” said Antonia Parkes NUW Victorian legal officer and national vice president.

Workers at Murray Goulburn will also have 14 days notice of any changes to their shifts, which is an improvement on the previous seven-day notice period. They are also able to cash out a greater proportion of sick leave if they leave or are made redundant

Bryan O'Halloran, delegate at Leongatha Murray Goulburn says this allows people to plan their lives outside work, “We battle all the time to make sure things are alright. We would be nowhere without the union.”

Bryan is one of three delegates that make up the Union team at the Leongatha plant.

“The union is pro-active, among workers here continuously negotiating with management, about wages and conditions,” he says. We have 99% membership at the site. Leongatha delegates have been able to call on the expertise of NUW head office whenever needed which has been beneficial, and delivered good results.”

Bryan is also an Occupational Health and Safety representative and says the union presence is vital for maintaining a healthy and safe working environment.

“Management come and talk to us about what they are going to do and it's better for everyone that way.”