

# Power at Work by Michael Crosby

## Foreword

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**Greg Combet, Secretary, Australian Council of Trade Unions**

Michael Crosby is a passionate unionist – a true believer in the social justice cause of the labour movement. He has devoted most of his working life to representing working people.

Over the last ten years Michael has gained a unique insight into Australian unions as a result of his reforming work with the ACTU's Organising Centre.

At a time of unprecedented change and challenge many unions have trusted Michael to shine a light into every nook and cranny of their organisation. He has advised them how to modernise their union and to rebuild their membership.

His experience, and his passion for change, has informed this book. His account of the strategic imperatives confronting Australian unions in the 21st century is the most comprehensive statement of the issues yet written.

Michael's book therefore represents an important contribution to the debate about the future of unions.

Two key dynamics are clouding this future – economic change and a hostile political environment. Michael Crosby makes the case for top to bottom change in unions to address these challenges.

His argument is that unions can no longer rely on institutional support from governments, industrial tribunals, awards or “passive” employers. He argues that unions must direct their resources towards building organisational power in the workplace and the industry.

This in itself is not a new insight. However, experience has demonstrated that organisational renewal is far easier said than done. The value of Michael's work lies in his effort to detail what has worked and what hasn't.

I encourage all people who care about the future of unions, and the labour movement, to read and debate the issues contained in this book.

As ACTU Secretary, and as a colleague, I would like to thank Michael for making the considerable effort to document his experience and his views, and for his long-standing commitment to our cause.