**Entry type:** Organisation
**Entry ID:** AWE0644

# Australian Railways Union – Victorian Branch

**Occupation** Trade Union

## Summary

The Victorian Branch of the Australian Railways Union (ARU), in contrast to many other male unions, did not encourage female rail workers to set up a separate section. In 1920 the Victorian Railways commenced employing women in sizeable numbers mainly as waitresses, barmaids, laundresses and cooks at various city and country railway stations. At this time, the Refreshment Services Branch was established with the introduction of new machinery into railway administrative offices, however females began to perform clerical work traditionally done by better-paid men. During World War II women began working in positions traditionally reserved for men. The Union participated in the Council of Action for Equal Pay, a body formed in 1937 to further the interests of female workers, as well as contributing to the Australian Council of Trade Union organized conferences on equal pay held in April and September 1942. Women paid junior rates for their union fees until equal pay was achieved.

## Details

Victorian rail unionism began with the labourers' Mutual Service Association of 1884. Others formed (of which the Locomotive Enginemen's retained separate identity until 1990s), but moves to form an 'all-grades' union culminated with the establishment of the Victorian Railways Union (VRU) in 1911. Though attracted by the idea of One Big Union, VRU opted to become Victorian Branch of the Australian Railways Union (ARU) in 1920. The ARU in Victoria has long been militant and active in all major industrial campaigns of its existence. In 1993 it merged with Tram and Bus union and became a division of the Public Transport Union.

## Published resources

**Book**
In the service? : a history of Victorian Railways workers and their union, Butler-Bowdon, Eddie, 1991

**Resource**
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

**The University of Melbourne Archives**
Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Union

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch

**Museums Victoria Collections**
Banner - Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch, circa 1911

**Author Details**
Anne Heywood

**Created** 15 December 2003
**Last modified** 1 May 2009