

## Call For Papers

### *Fighting For Life: Class, Community and Care in Labour History* **Australian Society for the Study of Labour History Conference** **Bendigo, 5–8 December 2021**

The onset of the recent pandemic has illuminated vital links between health, labour and community history. The collective experience of paid work, as labour historians have long shown, is highly differentiated according to the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, disability, religion, ethnicity and class. As the threat of contagion from Covid-19 spread, the reality of these intersections within contemporary working conditions came starkly into view. Health workers became frontline heroes combating the impact of disease and sustaining life, while statistics showed their susceptibility to infection and its transmission to communities. Revelations about the breadth and depth of precarity, mobility, even wage theft, in health work and across many sectors of the workforce, exposed threats to community physical and mental health from decades of neoliberal policies, practices of workplace management and declining union power. Older union campaigns for occupational health and safety in hazardous industries took on new meaning as care homes, hospitals, cruise ships and abattoirs became the epicentres of workplace disease. Regional and community differences made the impacts and consequences of the crisis neither uniform nor predictable. How the economic and social costs were disproportionately carried – by women, the young, and vulnerable Indigenous or migrant communities – showed up vast inequalities of resources, housing and welfare services. For some, technology enabled new work cultures to emerge. Working from home broke down old boundaries.

Convenors of the ASSLH conference have chosen this moment of an international health crisis to examine changes in the meaning and historical context of labour health and community. What have been the experiences and relationships between health, community, and labour over time? Can a crisis be an opportunity for strengthening community networks and increasing political organisation for meaningful change?

The conference organisers invite submissions for papers exploring this theme and also welcome papers on all aspects of labour experience. We are particularly keen to have papers exploring:

- intersections of class, gender, ethnic and generational differences
- methodologies for studying labour's history
- economic and health crises in earlier periods or national histories
- illuminations of community in remembering and story-telling
- a rural, or regional focus
- health, safety and disability
- Indigenous labour and political protest
- moments and strategies of workers' resistance to health risks

**Abstracts of 200 words**, and a brief bio., with institutional or organisational affiliation where relevant, should be submitted via <https://www.labourhistory.org.au/2021-conference/> by the **deadline of 1 April 2021**. Acceptances will be notified in May 2021.

We don't expect international travel to have resumed by December and it's quite possible domestic travel including NZ may also be disrupted. The conference will be a hybrid format with provision for both digital and in-person participation, details of which will be announced later. Please indicate on your proposal if you are anticipating or prefer digital participation.

Convenors: Emma Robertson, Diane Kirkby. Conference Assistant: Dmytro Ostapenko.  
Consultative Committee: Charles Fahey, Ruth Ford, Jennifer Jones, Katie Wood.