



Name: **Andrew Vickers**

Name of Union: **Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union**

Providence/Country: **Australia**

Job/Title: **General Secretary, Mining and Energy Division**

### **Please tell me something special about your hometown.**

My hometown is Ipswich, in Queensland, just outside the state capital of Brisbane. It's a city of about 150,000 and its history is as a coal-mining town although it's been pretty much mined out. I left there as a young man to go work elsewhere in the coal fields of Queensland but eventually I came back. I still live there and I commute to and from Sydney when required – Sydney is too big for me, I'm a small town boy.

### **What kind of work do the members of your union perform?**

We're 25,000 members strong and we work predominantly in coal mining, coal ports and terminals, power stations and to a smaller extent some hard-rock mining.

### **What is the most-pressing issue(s) facing workers in your country today?**

You can safely say it's unfriendly, right-wing governments and all they bring with that, such as winding back health and safety standards, attacking workers' rights to collective bargaining, going after unions and their ability to represent workers. We're now facing the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, which is a bit like a Senate standing committee here in the U.S., which could call workers to testify, with no rights. It's all aimed at punishing workers and unions and making it more difficult for them to fight for their rights.

### **What do you hope to accomplish during your time here at the Convention?**

There's a whole series of things – to build broader, global solidarity with workers and unions like the United Steelworkers, to deepen my understanding of what confronts workers and unions in North America and to have the opportunity to catch up with old friends and workmates before I retire. That's a couple of years away.

### **How do you think it benefits workers in your country when you meet with workers from unions in other countries?**

It's important to build our general understanding of the issues and challenges that confront workers and unions in other countries, getting to speak with rank-and-file members, sharing our various experiences dealing with some of the same multinational corporations that we confront in our respective countries, which leads to tremendous opportunities for building global solidarity and taking global, strategic action to fight back against these multinationals.

### **What is your impression of Las Vegas?**

It's hot and glitzy and impressive, there's nothing quite like it in Australia. We have our big tourist destination, the Gold Coast, which has one casino and there are more than 100 here. But I've spent all of my time at the convention and attending events and meeting people here.

