



Democracy, Social Justice and the Role of Trade Unions

We the Working People

Edited by Caroline Kelly and Joo-Cheong Tham

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“In an era when democratic institutions are under great strain, this important volume brings together leading scholars to examine the central constitutional role of trade unions as guarantors of democracy and social justice. The chapters consider the multiple challenges presented by climate change, migration, the erosion of secure employment, the global pandemic, and international trade. The need for strong and democratic trade unions has never been so urgent. This book is a vital scholarly contribution to these debates.” — Alan Bogg, Professor of Labour Law, Bristol University, UK

“After decades of being decimated by hostile and repressive politics, this important book considers whether trade unions can emerge once more to cement their place as a formidable democratic institution; to give workers a proper voice at work and on the political stage. I commend it to you.” — Josh Bornstein, Principal Lawyer, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, Australia

Trade unions worldwide face a powerful paradox at this critical juncture: collective organisations for workers are urgently needed and yet there are serious pressures undercutting the legitimate role of trade unions. The aim of this book is to examine how trade unions can effectively navigate this deeply contradictory challenge. It is underpinned by the conviction that trade unions are – and should be – vital institutions for democracy and social justice.

Written by leading scholars in industrial relations and labour law as well as those in political philosophy and political science, the collection tackles a range of pressing topics for trade unions including: the climate crisis; the COVID-19 pandemic; economic democracy; democracy within trade unions; precarious work; and election campaigns.

About the Editors

Joo-Cheong Tham is a professor at Melbourne Law School and director of the Electoral Regulation Research Network. His research areas are labour law and public law, with a focus on law and democracy and precarious work.

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