

**Union Effectiveness during Privatisation: Lessons  
from the telecommunications industry in Australia  
and Taiwan**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis analyses how telecommunications unions in Australia and Taiwan struggled for their members' interests in response to privatisation during 1996-2004. The thesis makes an argument that union effectiveness is based on its responses rather than external environments; and although unions' strategic choices are influenced by institutions, what is significant is to trace out the reciprocal interconnections between the two. The thesis highlights the significance of union leaders' decisions and membership participation during privatisation.

In its early chapters the thesis explores the historical background, and relevant theory about union strategies and effectiveness. In addition the early chapters explore the state of Australian and Taiwan public sector unions, to set the context for a discussion of contemporary Australian and Taiwan telecommunications unions' responses during privatisation.

In later chapters the concept of effective trade unionism (defined as the capacity of a union to reproduce itself as a collective organization) is explored in terms of the union responses to privatisation in both countries. Whether the CPSU, the CEPU, and the CTWU protected members' interests centres around two main questions: (1) did union strategies delay or stop the progress of privatisation? (2) did union leadership improve job security, public servant status, wages and working conditions for their members while partial privatisation was underway?

In order to evaluate effective trade unionism in a comparative perspective, there are two levels of analysis in this thesis. Firstly, there is a comparison of the CPSU, the CEPU,

and the CTWU in terms of three aspects (membership density, financial strength, and the overall structure of the union). Secondly, there is a comparative analysis of the CPSU, the CEPU, and the CTWU in terms of seven union strategic choices during privatisation.

In summary, the responses of two telecommunications unions in Australia and Taiwan to privatisation illustrate the old Chinese old adage: 'If you don't fight, you lose!' But the way in which unions fought privatisation were many and had to be suited to their circumstances. Importantly, unions in Australia and Taiwan can learn from each other's successful experiences in a restructuring environment, such as privatisation.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ABS    | Australian Bureau of Statistics                          |
| ACA    | Australian Communications Authority                      |
| ACAC   | Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission       |
| ACCC   | Australian Competition and Consumer Commission           |
| ACOA   | Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association        |
| ACTU   | Australian Council of Trade Unions                       |
| AIRC   | Australian Industrial Relations Commission               |
| ALP    | Australian Labor Party                                   |
| AMIEU  | Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union                |
| AMWU   | Australian Manufacturing Workers Union                   |
| AOTC   | Australian Oversea Telecommunications Corporation        |
| APS    | Australian Public Service                                |
| APSA   | Australian Public Service Association                    |
| ATEA   | Australian Telecommunications Employees Association      |
| ATPOA  | Australian Telephone and Phonogram Officers' Association |
| APTU   | Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union           |
| Austel | Australian Telecommunications Authority                  |
| CBA    | Collective Bargaining Agreement                          |
| CHT    | Chunghwa Telecom Company                                 |
| CEPU   | Communications Electrical Plumbing Union                 |
| CEPD   | Council for Economic Planning and Development            |
| CFL    | Chinese Federation of Labour                             |
| CPL    | Chinese Petroleum Company                                |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| CPSU  | Community and Public Sector Union             |
| CSC   | China Steel Corporation                       |
| CTWU  | Chunghwa Telecom Workers' Union               |
| CWU   | Communication Workers Union                   |
| CSATU | Congress of South African Trade Unions        |
| DPP   | Democratic Progressive Party                  |
| DGT   | Directorate General of Telecommunications     |
| EBA   | Enterprise Bargaining Agreement               |
| EEO   | Equal Employment Opportunity                  |
| GBEs  | Government business enterprises               |
| ITF   | Industrial Transport Federation               |
| KMT   | Kuomintang                                    |
| LLU   | Local Loop Unbundling                         |
| LSL   | Labor Standards Law                           |
| MUA   | Maritime Union of Australia                   |
| MOTC  | Ministry of Transportation and Communications |
| MPRS  | Monthly Pension Retirement Scheme             |
| NDC   | Network, Design and Construction              |
| NICs  | Newly Industrialized Countries                |
| OTC   | Overseas Telecommunication Corporation        |
| PA    | Participative Approach                        |
| PMG   | Postmaster Generals Department                |
| PSU   | Public Sector Union                           |
| POA   | Professional Officers Association             |
| RAAF  | Royal Australia Air Force                     |
| SOEs  | State-Owned Enterprises                       |

|     |                                 |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| TL  | Telecommunications Laws         |
| TTU | Taiwan Telecommunications Union |
| WRA | Workplace Relations Act         |

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## Statement of Originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no materials previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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