

Union Organiser interview questions

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What to expect

Union organiser interviews assess your understanding of industrial relations, your ability to build relationships across diverse worksites, and your resilience in the face of employer resistance. Expect a mix of process, behavioural and scenario questions, often with a panel that includes senior organisers or union officials.

- **Process and technical:** Questions about recruitment methods, enterprise bargaining, right of entry and the Fair Work Act.
- **Behavioural:** Questions drawing on past experience of persuading, organising or handling conflict.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypothetical workplace disputes, industrial action or member grievances to test your decision-making.
- **Values and motivation:** Questions about why you support the union movement and how you handle disagreement.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about work health and safety, record keeping and legal obligations during campaigns.

The process usually starts with a phone or video screen, then a panel interview with senior organisers and sometimes a union official. You may be asked to complete a short written exercise, such as drafting a campaign message or a recruitment plan, and some unions include a role-play where you practise a recruitment conversation or a grievance meeting.

1. Walk us through how you would approach organising a new worksite that has no union members and no delegate.

Why they ask

Tests your practical organising method and whether you can build from scratch.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: research, initial contacts, mapping, one-on-ones, building a committee, and setting next steps.

Example answer

"First, I would research the employer's structure, shifts, and any existing grievances. Then I would find two or three workers who are respected and open to a conversation. I'd meet them off-site to understand what matters to them and ask who else they think would be interested. From there, I would map the workplace by department or shift and start regular one-on-ones with a core group. The goal is to build a small committee that can plan its own campaign, whether that's around rosters, pay or safety. I would support them with resources and training, but let them lead the public conversations. Once the committee is confident, we would set a clear first win, like a petition or a meeting with management, and use that to recruit more members."

2. Tell me about a time you persuaded someone who was initially resistant to your point of view.

Why they ask

Assesses your influencing skills and how you handle pushback, which is central to organising.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"At a previous worksite, a long-serving employee was strongly against joining the union. He thought unions were only about strikes and didn't see how they could help him. I didn't argue. Instead, I asked about his experience with shift changes and how they had affected his family. He opened up about unpredictable hours. I shared that the union was negotiating a roster clause and asked if he'd like to see the draft. He read it, asked questions, and over a few weeks he decided to join. He then became one of the most active members in the site committee, and he helped bring in six other workers. The result was a stronger collective voice on rostering, and it taught me that persuasion starts with listening."

3. You're at a worksite and a member tells you they have been unfairly dismissed. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests your judgement under pressure and your knowledge of grievance and dismissal procedures.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: immediate response, assess the situation, advise on options, escalate and document.

Example answer

"First, I would make sure the member is okay and ask for the facts: what happened, when they were told, and what was said. I would explain that there are time limits for unfair dismissal claims and that we need to act quickly. I would check whether they are covered by an enterprise agreement or the Fair Work Act, and whether they want to pursue reinstatement or compensation. Then I would help them lodge a claim with the Fair Work Commission within the 21-day window if that's the right path, and I would connect them with legal support if needed. I would also document the conversation and brief the lead organiser. Throughout, I would keep the member informed and make sure they understand the process."

4. What do you know about the enterprise bargaining process under the Fair Work Act, and how would you support members through it?

Why they ask

Assesses technical knowledge and your ability to translate it into member action.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation followed by a practical support plan.

Example answer

"Under the Fair Work Act, bargaining starts when an employer or union gives notice of representational rights. Both parties must bargain in good faith, which means meeting, disclosing relevant information and responding to proposals. If bargaining stalls, the union can apply for a protected action ballot so members can vote on industrial action. I would support members by running regular meetings to update them on the claims and the employer's position, helping them understand the legal steps, and building delegate capacity to hold conversations on the floor. I would also make sure the bargaining team includes ordinary members, not just officials, so the campaign is genuinely member-led."

5. How would you handle a situation where a member raises a serious work health and safety concern during a campaign?

Why they ask

Tests your understanding of WHS duties and your ability to act responsibly while keeping campaign momentum.

How to structure your answer

Risk-based response: assess, consult, escalate, support.

Example answer

"I would take the concern seriously and not treat it as a campaign distraction. First, I would ask the member for details and check whether there is an immediate risk to life or health. If there is, I would advise them to raise it with their health and safety representative or manager immediately. I would then help them document the issue and, if needed, support them to report it to the relevant work health and safety regulator. I would also let the lead organiser know, because a serious safety issue can become a powerful organising issue if members feel the union is responding. Throughout, I would make sure the member is protected from any reprisal, which is their legal right."

6. Why do you want to work as a union organiser, and what would you do if a member disagreed with a union decision?

Why they ask

Explores your values and your approach to internal disagreement.

How to structure your answer

Personal motivation followed by a conflict resolution approach.

Example answer

"I want to be an organiser because I've seen how collective action improves people's working lives, and I want to help workers find their voice. If a member disagreed with a union decision, I would first listen carefully to understand their concern. I would explain the reasoning behind the decision, including any legal or strategic factors they might not be aware of. If they still disagreed, I would encourage them to raise it at a member meeting or with the relevant committee, because debate is part of a democratic union. I would also make sure they know their rights and that disagreeing with a decision does not affect their membership or representation. The goal is to keep the member engaged, even if we don't see eye to eye."