

In May 2000, Sharan Burrow became the second woman to be elected President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

In December 2004, Sharan was the first woman to be elected President of the world union body, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which represents 148 million workers in 231 affiliated organisations across 150 countries.

In 2006 Sharan went on to be elected President of the newly founded International Trade Union Confederation that now represents some 168 million workers in 155 countries worldwide.

In October 2000, Sharan also became the first woman to be elected President of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Asia Pacific Region Organisation.

Sharan was born in 1954 in Warren, a small town in western New South Wales (NSW), into a family with a long history of involvement in unions and the struggle to improve the lives of working people.

Her great, great grandfather participated in the shearers' strike of 1891/92, becoming one of the first organisers for the Australian Workers' Union and standing for the state seat of Cobar for the fledgling Australian Labor Party in 1896.

Sharan studied teaching at the University of NSW in 1976 and began her teaching career in high schools around country NSW.

She became an organiser for the NSW Teachers' Federation, based in Bathurst, and was President of the Bathurst Trades and Labour Council during the 1980s.

Sharan was elected senior vice-president of the NSW Teachers' Federation and became president of the Australian Education Union (AEU) in 1992. She represented the AEU on the ACTU Executive through the 1990s.

Sharan was previously vice-president of Education International from 1995 to 2000. Education International is the international organisation of education unions representing 24 million members worldwide.

She is currently President of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights, a member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation and a member of the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative. As part of her ILO responsibilities, Sharan chairs the Workers' Group of the Sub-Committee on Multinational Enterprises.