



Laurence Cohen

# Laurence Cohen

*Trade unionist and political leader*

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Born on 22 March 1874 at Gaffney's Creek in Victoria, Laurence Cohen was the sixth child of John Cohen, a miner and a London Jew, and his Parisian wife Louisa Clotilda. He came to Melbourne as a child, left school early and had various jobs until he became apprenticed to George F. Atyeo, a noted monumental mason with whom he formed a close relationship.

Cohen's career in trade unionism began with the Marble and Stone Workers' Union of which he was secretary from 1905 until 1913. He was a union delegate to the Trades Hall Council and soon joined its executive, was its president and was appointed to the salaried position of assistant secretary in 1913.

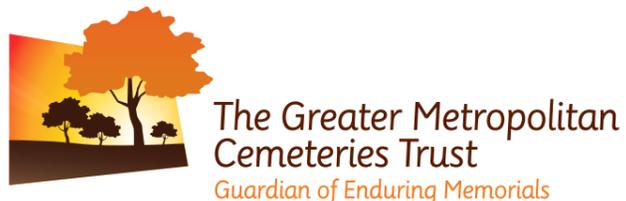
He became a powerful union leader, and as president of the Political Labor Council displayed great organisational skill and dedication. He ensured that the Catholic Federation did not infiltrate the Party and earlier denounced the Socialists as electorally divisive. In 1915, he was the Victorian delegate to the Federal Conference.

He died in Adelaide on 12 February 1916 after speaking at a fund-raising meeting for striking Broken Hill miners. He had fallen from his hotel bedroom window. No reason for the fall has ever been discovered.

In 1909 he married Sarah Lemmon, sister of John Lemmon, union organiser and politician. They were childless.

Despite his Jewish heritage, Cohen was buried in the Presbyterian section of the Cemetery with his wife Sarah, sister Olivia and her husband Alfred Atyeo. The Atyeos were the parents of Sam Atyeo, artist, designer and diplomat, who was a member of the Heide circle and a forerunner of abstract painting in Australia.

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The above information is based on research conducted in 2011-2012 and is presented in good faith by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery. Should family members wish to upgrade existing monuments within this cemetery please email [enquiries@gmct.com.au](mailto:enquiries@gmct.com.au)