

E-BULLETIN **Postal**

#6. Friday, 19 April 2013



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1. CWU reps locked out of Australia Post's road show

This week AP Managing Director and CEO, Ahmed Fahour, locked out over a hundred CWU delegates who had been invited to a meeting with him at the Grand Hyatt Ballroom in Collins Street, Melbourne.

The delegates had donned shirts for Mr Fahour's road show with the message: "EBA 8 Time to Deliver" and carried posters "Ahmed: It's Time to Deliver a Decent Pay-rise." Unfortunately Post thought that this was inappropriate and refused entry to the reps.

CWU Vic secretary, Joan Doyle, said that the lock-out was poor form when all the delegates had been invited and had travelled long distances to be there to meet with Mr Fahour.



In Victoria where reps turned up, they were turned away!

Ironically, Australia Post was unable to get reps to attend in Western Australia where the general consensus among delegates was that they had heard it all before and they would prefer to focus on getting the mail out.

Delegates in South Australia were stunned to hear the CEO suggest the pay rise be paid for by reducing the contribution Post makes to the defined benefit superannuation scheme.

Somewhere between SA and NSW the CEO changed his message and started referring to the possibility of a 2% pay rise. In the same presentation he berated the union for making claims he said would cost Post \$450 million. How Post came up with this figure is anybody's guess as negotiations are in their early stages and the union has not put in its formal pay claim yet!

While the road show was promoted as an opportunity for delegates to have their questions answered by the CEO it quickly became apparent to the reps who did attend that this was really about Post continuing to cry poor and that the CEO was less than comfortable with the questions, especially when one rep pointed out that Ahmed was paid more in a week than the rep was in a year!

The road show finished as badly as it started when the CEO, pulled out at of the visit to Tasmania at the last minute and was replaced by Executive General Manager for Parcels.

2. Australia Post announces an employment freeze

Last week AP announced that it will implement an enterprise-wide freeze on certain types of recruitment, i.e. all external recruitment (existing and new) and external contractor, fixed term or casual.

The recruitment freeze covers all external recruitment at all levels (base-grade, Award & contract), all extensions to eg. fixed term and all conversions eg. contractors to permanent positions.

The freeze will not impact on internal promotions, transfers, redeployment. Vacancies should only be filled internally, although AP say Executive General Managers will have some scope for exemptions based on operational requirements.

The measures were announced by AP as part of an attempt to contain costs and offset revenue declines.

Meanwhile, the CWU Branch in WA has warned of widespread delays in mail deliveries across WA as a result of AP's austerity drive. CWU WA secretary Barry McVee said the freeze will be disastrous in WA with postal delivery employees in Perth routinely work 12-hour days because of understaffing.

Other State branches have also expressed concerns about the impact of freeze on frontline staff - AP has agreed to discuss the union's concerns at the various States next week.

3. Fixed term dispute

The CWU notified a dispute in the FWC in relation to the number of fixed term employees AP was recruiting.

As a result of the FWC hearing AP agreed to review fixed term employees in mail and delivery areas across Australia with the effect that in workplaces with fixed term employees over 5%, these employees were to be permanently appointed. This process is almost completed.

The next step was to look at workplaces with fixed term employees at or under 5%. AP argued that mail volumes were dropping significantly hence the recruitment of fixed term only employees. The FWC suggested that a trial be conducted in Melbourne and Sydney to measure mail volume declines and look at the issues raised by the union such as, the increase in parcels, number of divides (cut ups) and staff turnover. Last week AP informed the FWC that it does not agree to a trial – the matter will now go back to senior AP delivery management and the union for discussion and to FWC if not resolved.

4. Decipha EBA negotiations commence

Decipha EBA negotiations commenced last week at Decipha's office in Abbotsford, Victoria. Present were CWU Divisional Assistant Secretary, State Officials and the local CWU delegate.

The union tabled the log of claims that was developed from member feedback. Decipha management were informed the claims were not yet complete as members in some States are still being surveyed.

Some of the priority claims for members are:

- 15% loading for the whole shift if commencing work before 6am
- An increase in redundancy provisions
- Ability to transfer into Australia Post rather than been made redundant
- All night staff to be paid at 30%
- Increase in tea break time to 10-15 minutes
- Australia Post Authorised Holiday to be a paid day off

- Annual leave arrangements to be examined including the taking of leave at agreed times
- Salary maintenance to be paid if moved to lower classifications
- Increase in all allowances.

Decipha management outlined some of their claims:

- 2 year agreement
- Review classification structures, especially the removal of increment levels
- Split shifts
- Move some supervisors off Award conditions and onto fixed salary arrangements
- Reduction in minimum shifts from 4-3 hours
- Meal allowance eligibility to move from 1 hour overtime to 2 hours.

Meetings are due to take place every two weeks. Obviously, the more members, the better the outcome, so encourage your workmates to join the union.

5. Australia Post's new parcel price structure

Following the Australia Post overhaul of its delivery services, customers will now have to choose a speed - same day, next day, or regular - and then add-ons such as extra cover or cash on delivery.

The cost of AP's signature-on-delivery service, once restricted to eBay sellers via the Click and Send service but now universally available, has almost tripled, from \$1 to \$2.95.

Such add-ons could mean price increases of up to 40 per cent for online business owners. But AP says the increase in prices is mostly "less than 7 per cent" and would now include tracking of parcels as standard.

Whilst online businesses are trying to understand and deal with AP's new system and their price rises, the poor Post Office workers, have a whole lot of extra scanning to do with no additional time for eg. every item received into the Post Office has to be scanned and majority also carded for the addressee. Then there are the additional optional Express Post labels or Signature on delivery labels. Then when a parcel is delivered/collected scan it in again, put in the name on the scanning handset for EACH parcel.

The impact on post offices of the introduction of additional scanning will be raised by the CWU in a joint review of back office minutes that is to be commenced shortly.

6. Unions welcome superannuation changes

The ACTU has welcomed the Federal Government's long awaited superannuation policy changes, which it says promise to make the system fairer and more sustainable and efficient.

Key changes to the superannuation policy include:

- taxing, from July 1, 2014, earnings over \$100,000 annually on super and annuities at 15% (they are currently tax-free);
- increasing from 15% to 30% the tax on contributions to super by individuals earning more than \$300,000 a year; and
- raising from \$25,000 to \$35,000 the unindexed cap on concessional super contributions, to apply from July 1 this year for individuals aged over 60, then from July 1 next year for those over 60 and for all individuals from July 1, 2018.

With a rate of return of 5%, the Government said the change will only affect people with more than \$2 million in superannuation assets.

ACTU president Ged Kearney said the changes were a "long overdue step" that will make superannuation "fairer and more sustainable".

7. UK post offices targeted for modernisation

A Network Transformation Programme, backed by £1.34bn in government funds, aims to convert a total of 6,000 of the UK's 11,800 post offices into full-service "Main" or limited-service "Local" branches by 2015.

A "Local" branch, will offer customers services including automated banking services, bill payment and postal orders as well as postage, international letters and Special Delivery services.

Perhaps aware of criticism about Local post offices offering a limited range of services, the government highlighted the extended opening hours of one of the Local branches. The branch opens for 67 hours a week, it said, 16 hours more than under the traditional model, and it opens seven days per week.

"The £1.34bn package will help fund more conversions under the modernisation programme so that post offices can open longer, and safeguard the network at its current size," said Postal Affairs Minister Jo Swinson.

Post Office chief executive, Paula Vennells, said that public response to the new style of post offices has been positive – probably so because the modernisation has resulted in the reopening of post offices in local communities.

8. Workplace relations: Coalition emerging from long grass

The Coalition is slowly but surely emerging from the long grass in the area of workplace relations.

Although no detailed policies have been released, leaked documents reveal the Coalition intends to weaken employee and union rights in a number of key areas and so make the preservation of decent and fair conditions more difficult.

According to the documents the Coalition will:

- **Allow individual agreements to run for four years.** Currently individual "flexibility" agreements can be terminated by either an employer or an employee within 28 days of giving notice (or by agreement). This threatens to tie employees up in long-term individual contracts like the old AWAs.
- **Require workers to ask individually for representation in bargaining.** This is a return to the system that operated under John Howard's Workplace Relations Act. It means that a union does not automatically have a right to represent its members in bargaining i.e. to do what employees have basically created it to do.
- **Cut minimum hours of work for young workers.** Employers, especially in retail, have so far not succeeded in their campaign to slash minimum hours. So the Coalition will do it for them.
- **Restore unilateral "employer greenfield agreements"** where employers can dictate the terms of agreements on new projects or business without the agreement of workers or unions. Just like the old Section 330 of WorkChoices.

Unions have responded to these proposals by warning that they represent a plan to turn back the clock to the time of John Howard's WorkChoices regime.

“These policies are acutely one-sided and in the interest of business without any consideration for workers and their representatives,” ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said.

“The proposal on Greenfields allows an employer to reach an agreement with themselves – a bizarre situation.

There is no need for them to attempt genuine negotiations because they know that at the end of the day what they say goes.”

Mr Oliver said this would mean more power to employers to dictate terms, conditions and employment to the detriment of workers.

9. May Day 2013

May Day is coming up!

This year May Day will fall on a Wednesday but in most of Australia it will be marked by rallies and meetings on the weekend either before or after that day.

All the same, 1 May itself remains a day when working people around the world remember what they have achieved since the first international May Day rallies in 1890 - and at what cost.

10. Stop Press

Following concerns raised by the CWU about the impact of AP’s employment freeze on frontline staff, AP has revised its proposal. The freeze on employment is now to be read as intending ‘no new faces’ i.e. no new fixed term, contractors or casual engagement. However, existing contracts and fixed term positions that are due to expire can be rolled over - if the rollover of a fixed term contract creates problems in terms of the Fair Work Agreement then approval can be sought to convert the position to permanent. Existing casual pools can continue to be used as well.

Discussions scheduled for next week will still happen around the practical applications of the above.



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