

E-BULLETIN **Postal**

#4. Monday, 24 March 2014



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1. **March in March rally**

The Melbourne "March in March" rally saw a fantastic turnout with crowd estimates at over 30,000 people. The March in March events all over the country were an initiative originally organised by a handful of committed people using social media. A number of community groups spoke passionately on a range of issues. Your Union was included on the speakers list and the tens of thousands of participants were very supportive of the Hands off Aussie Post campaign.

The Victorian Branch of the Communication Workers Union had a table set up distributing campaign leaflets, car stickers and received hundreds of signatures on the Senate petition ([download here](#)).



"March in March rally passing Australia Post headquarters at 111 Bourke St, Melbourne"

Your National Office has had created a range of campaign materials and these are available to all State Branches. If any members require any materials for local distribution then do not hesitate to contact us.

2. **Postman Mike Bowden retires after 44 years of deliveries**

Source: *The Recorder* – 20 March 2014



Maxine Bowden, left, Mike Bowden, Port Pirie Delivery Centre manager Anthony Germinario and Brian Hector congratulate Mr Bowden on 44 years' service at a recent celebration.

Mike Bowden is fare welling Australia Post after 44 years as a postal delivery officer. An event was held to honor him at the BHAS Bowling Club recently.

Mr Bowden started at Australia Post in Terowie in 1969 and has been working in Port Pirie since 1978.

He enjoyed travelling all over the Mid North meeting people in different towns and was well-known in Port Pirie well-known in Port Pirie.

He worked in a variety of roles sorting, delivering and working on the nightshift at the telephone exchange in Peterborough.

Mr Bowden was always reliable and enjoyed his job. "There is not a day I remember that the post wasn't delivered," he said. "In Peterborough I even delivered in the snow. "No matter what the weather, the mail was always delivered."

Port Pirie Delivery Centre manager Anthony Germinario was full of praise for Mr Bowden and described him as an "excellent worker". "He was well-liked by his workmates and well-respected by the customers on his delivery round."

He looks forward to travelling when he retires – he has a son in New South Wales and a son in Queensland.

3. OHS Rep elections and training

It has come to the attention of your National office that members are not been fully advised of their rights under the Work Health and Safety Act.

One of the act's main aims was to deliver ownership of a number of processes back from management, to workers on the Job directly. The setting up of workgroups within a workplace is one such process.

Management have to negotiate about the setting up of a Workgroup. Factors that have to be taken into account are shifts, work functions, work locations etc. Any disputes would be dealt with by a Comcare investigator.

The actual election process can be decided by a majority of workers via a written petition. The workgroup can decide who they want to assist in the running of the election. This may be a trusted co-worker, your State Branch or your National office can assist if extra resources are required.

The Training of newly elected OHS reps has to occur within 3 months of a request been made. The OHS rep is free to decide which Registered training organisation (RTO) provides the training.

CWU can run the training. Additionally Australia Post conduct a course where the Union provides one session (the course runs over 5 days) but OHS reps are free to choose a course that focuses more on a Union approach to OHS. Australia Post have to meet all costs associated with such a course. All out of pocket expenses and loss of any wages also have to be paid by the employer.

Contact your National office for a List of RTO's in your State, these courses may be provided by the CWU National Office, your local trades and labour council or even another Union.

If sufficient numbers can be garnered your national office can provide the course in your State. We have already conducted several courses at National office in Melbourne.

If you have any Questions or need any advice your State branch are able to assist and should be your initial point of contact but your national office is always available if further resources are required.

4. NDMT trial to extend to all States

The NDMT (National Delivery Modelling Tool) trial at Seven Hills Delivery Facility has been ongoing for several months now with regular meetings including AURs, HSRs, union officials and Post management. The base data of all 130 plus PDOs has now been agreed to and this will go into the MDSCS data part of the tool along with Routesmart directions that have been signed off by the committee.

NDMT trials will now start in each State in the near future after briefings at the agreed workplace that will include the AUR and the State Branch. The sites are:

Wangara WA
 Tingalpa QLD
 Western Shore
 Salisbury Sth SA
 Western DC VIC

It is important for representatives on the committee to adhere to the agreed National Guidelines regarding the setting up and operations of the committee. It is not just a management driven initiative but is a collective process.

One of the key parts of NDMT is maximising full time positions. By using the NDMT modelling a dollar figure can be produced to see the financial impact that making part time positions into full-time. In many cases this saves the facility thousands of dollars but does impact on overtime levels.

Union members in the nominated workplaces are strongly encouraged to become involved in this important trial in their State. These workplaces will then become the reference point for NDMT in their State.

The National Delivery Committee that includes State and National union officials and Post management will continue to monitor the outcomes in the rollout process.

5. Mobile phone capability scanner trial

Trials will take place in Victoria and NSW to investigate enabling the current Motorola MC67 to be used as a mobile phone. This will necessitate a SIM card to be used that will allow the scanner to make and receive mobile phone calls on the Telstra network.

A voice enabled scanner could assist in consolidating equipment i.e. removing the two way radio from the van. The trials will take place from 31 March in NSW at Alexandria and Kingsgrove Hubs and VIC at Melbourne Consolidation Centre and Nunawading.

Feedback will be gathered from the drivers and if the trial is successful training material will be developed as well as a SOP (Safe Operating Procedures) with supporting Risk Assessment. The union will advise members the outcome of the trial.

6. Turnbull strongly backs Hockey on merged Human Services and Australia Post functions

(Source: Government News, 21 March 2014)



Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull has thrown his weight behind a bid by Treasurer Joe Hockey to get Australia Post to perform many of the over the counter functions of Centrelink and Medicare, a move that would be likely to trigger big job cuts at both organisations and a major consolidation of Commonwealth's retail property footprint.

Speaking at the [Australian Information Industry Association's Navigating Analytics Summit](#) in Canberra on Thursday [20th March], Mr Turnbull said that "Australia post has very big existential challenges" and confirmed that the Abbott government is now actively scoping for efficiencies in shared functions between key social security agencies Centrelink and Australia Post.

"Obviously these are matters of policy that we are considering," Mr Turnbull told public sector delegates to the forum.

The flagging of an expected extension of over-the-counter social security counter functions to Post pours cold water on a growing push within so-called 'dry' sections of the Coalition to either sell or float the mail monopoly off before it starts to heavily bleed cash because of the enormous cost of maintaining national letter delivery services in the face of dwindling volumes.

However it also opens the door to potentially large scale job-shedding across both of the organisations as delivery channels are rationalised and functions merged.

[Australia Post employs 32,000 staff](#) with another 10,000 franchisees, while the [Department of Human Services](#) last listed to employ around 33,000 staff.

The appeal of shrinking public sector costs by losing bodies is underscored that a one per cent headcount reduction across both organisations would remove 650 jobs from public payroll.

While Mr Turnbull studiously avoided any talk of headcount, or its reduction, the Communications Minister made pointed reference to the costs of maintaining profitless mail services.

"We all understand that Australia Post is a high fixed cost business," Mr Turnbull said.

"Its letter volumes are declining year on year inexorably, as they are with every post office in the world. "So you lose a dollar of letter revenue that is a very large percentage – I won't say exactly how much, but it's extremely high ... straight off the bottom line [of Australia Post]."

Mr Turnbull said that Australia Post needed "about three and a half dollars of parcel revenue to make up for a dollar of lost letter revenue."

"They are not seeing that," the Communications Minister said, repeating that "Australia Post has very big existential challenges."

Mr Turnbull noted that "one of the factors that feeds into is the viability" of both Post Offices and "licensed and Post Offices" (that are usually franchised) was the looking at what other services they could deliver.

"One way to address the viability of those Post Offices, or to support them and of course to deliver [better] government services, is to use them as locations for the delivery of Medicare Services, Centrelink Services – [but] recognising there are limitations in terms of expertise," Mr Turnbull said.

"In other words to deliver more trusted government services through that Australia Post network," he said. The recognition of potential limitations is likely to interpret as a strong signal that franchisees will not be forced to take on social security functions if they do not want to, a factor especially pertinent in areas of high welfare dependency where recipients need higher levels of specialised attention.

Many Australia Post franchisees are known to be less than keen to deal with some of Centrelink's more challenging customers, especially those who have drug dependency or mental health conditions.

Human Services executives have previously highlighted that they now anticipated that over-the-counter interactions with customers will become necessarily more challenging for staff because the widespread rollout of online reporting functions meant that many people now did not need visit an office to discharge their obligations.

It is known that higher proportion of customers presenting to Centrelink offices that exhibit challenging behavioral issues, like verbally or physically abusing staff, has led to changes to security arrangements including the use of security guards in offices to deter some customers from escalating their levels of aggression towards staff.

It is understood that many Centrelink Offices contain a so-called “angry phone” where aggressive customers can dial into a call centre staffed by officers with specialist conflict resolution training to deal with aggressive or traumatised individuals.

It is understood that there is a push within Human Services for “higher intensity” customers to remain being dealt by Centrelink, with the most probable functions to go to Post being forms lodgement for benefits like Medicare refunds.

Under the previous Howard Government, the cost of manually processing Medicare refunds had been calculated to be up to \$10 per over the counter transaction – or as much as 20 per cent of a \$50 refund for a doctor’s fee.

Those costs led to the introduction of the initially Eftpos-based Easyclaim electronic refund that could be processed at a surgery without the need to visit a Medicare office.

Mr Turnbull said he saw potential for technology innovations from the retail bank branches to be applied to Post and social security functions. He cited the introduction of video kiosks at St George Branches. “There is obviously a lot that can be done with a video kiosk,” Mr Turnbull said.

“At many of those branches you can now go and sit in front of a video screen and talk to a domain expert at the St George head office.”

Julian Bajkowski attended the Navigating Analytics Summit as a guest of the Australian Information Industry Association.

7. Warning bells as Productivity Commission reviews workplace laws

The draft terms of reference for the Abbott government’s review of the *Fair Work Act* have heightened fears that the review will be used to attack the wage levels and employment conditions of Australian workers.

The review is to be undertaken by the Productivity Commission which will be given a very broad brief to look at the impact of current workplace laws on employment, unemployment, productivity and labour market “flexibility”.

Responding to the draft terms, which were leaked to the Fairfax press, ACTU president Ged Kearney said the government appeared to be “putting the entire workplace relations system on trial”.

“Everything is up for grabs: awards, penalty rates, enterprise bargaining and protection from unfair dismissal.”

The Abbott government has not yet signed off on these terms of reference. But if it does it will amount to a blank cheque to the Productivity Commission to propose radical changes to the current system.

And there will be no prizes for guessing whether those changes will most benefit employees or employers.

8. Coalition moves to water down compensation protections

A bill being introduced into parliament by the Abbott government will reduce workers' ability to seek compensation for injuries received during the working day.

Under the current Commonwealth laws, workers are entitled to claim compensation for injuries incurred off-site during a work "recess" i.e. during a lunch or other work break.



Access to recess cover has changed over the years depending on which party was in government. The entitlement existed prior to 2004 when a Productivity Commission inquiry found that injuries sustained during "an ordinary recess" in employment should only be compensable if they occurred at the workplace or during employer-sanctioned events.

Recess coverage was subsequently removed by the Howard Government, but restored by Labor in 2011.

The Coalition now argues that employers should not be liable for injuries sustained in an environment or through an activity over which they have no control.

"The effect of this [current] provision is that workers' compensation could be payable, for example, where an employee sustains an injury while shopping or playing sport during a lunch break," the explanation of the bill states.

It remains to be seen of course whether the bill will pass the Senate.

9. Big data and the surveillance state

The US National Security Agency has created a surveillance system capable of recording "100%" of a nation's phone calls according to documents provided by NSA whistle-blower Edward Snowden to the US *Washington Post*.

The phone call recordings are collected under a programme called MYSTIC, which started in 2009. In 2011, the programme added a tool, called RETRO, (short for "retrospective retrieval") that allows the NSA to record "every single" telephone call in a targeted country and retrieve them for up to 30 days,

This allows NASA to have access to data on the person's conversations and movements at a time before they may have been identified as a target for surveillance.

The system was developed for use in one particular country which the *Washington Post* agreed not to name at the request of US officials. But a further five countries have reportedly been targeted by the programme.

In the wake of Snowden’s revelations last year about the vast scale of US electronic spying, the US administration tried to deflect criticism by claiming it only collected “metadata” on its own citizens and those of other countries, i.e. information about phone calls but not the content of the call itself.

President Obama claimed on January 17 that the “bulk collection of telephone records ... does not involve the content of phone calls.”

These latest reports give the lie to that claim.



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