

# E-BULLETIN Postal

# 21. Monday, 24 November 2014



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## 1. Stamp price increase?

"The price of stamps could hit as much as \$1 a letter under plans to arrest the losses on letters. Ahmed Fahour has asked Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull to present a rescue package to Cabinet before Christmas, including a two-tiered system for mail and flexible pricing for delivery services." (Extract from AFR.)

Mr Fahour says letter volumes are falling off a "cliff". But

Australia Post's annual report shows an overall \$116.2 million profit. Revenue increased to \$6.4 billion, up 8.3% on last year. Addressed mail volumes dropped 4% last year, not 12% as spruiked by Mr Fahour. Indeed Post still delivered over a billion letters.



While the CWU supports a modest increase in price of stamps, the fact is that Post is undertaking staff cuts, modernising equipment, delivering parcels through its mail network and other costs saving measures.

Under the plan, which would require government approval, Post would introduce a two-tiered pricing system, similar to the UK's second class mail service, for non-urgent letter deliveries. Customers wanting speedier letter delivery would pay more than the standard rate.

### Self-fulfilling prophecy

Australia Post has already introduced a two-speed, user-pays system for business letters, after the government dropped ACCC oversight of its business division.

Printing Industries Association chief Bill Healey said that Mr Fahour seemed to be fast-tracking the demise of its core business, mail.

"The frequency and intensity with which he denounces the future of post is concerning," he said. "It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy where he can put the price up and say, 'you see, I told you the mail was dead'," Mr Healey said.

Source: The Australian Financial Review (AFR)

## 2. Application for Post modern enterprise award

As members know the CWU National Office is seeking to have a modern enterprise award for Post rather than being covered by several modern industry awards.

Under the award modernisation process, all existing enterprise awards ceased to operate at the end of 2013 unless an application was made to modernise them before that date.

In the case of Post, this would have led to most employees being covered by several different modern industry awards. None of these awards meet the specific terms and conditions of employment of Post.

The CWU considered that modernising the current Post awards (General Conditions of Employment Award, Operations Award, Technical Award, and Administrative Award) provided the best outcome for Post employees.

Some key factors for the CWU were preserving the 36.75 ordinary hours of work per week, the relevant hours of duty in respect of delivery, retail, mail transport, administration and in technical areas and 15 days of paid personal/carers leave each year.

The CWU has proposed a number of changes to the draft modern enterprise award. These issues include casual loading increased to 25% and minimum number of hours (3hours) for part-time employees in line with many industry awards and national wage case decisions.

The FWC has issued directions regarding submissions to be provided by Post and the union. A date for hearing the application has not been set as yet.

**If members have any questions or comments in relation to the application for a modern enterprise award they should contact the CWU National Office on P (03) 9001 9920, F (03) 9642 0333, E [cwu@cwu.org.au](mailto:cwu@cwu.org.au)**

### **3. Post introduces alcohol and other drugs policy**

Post is now briefing transport drivers regarding the introduction of Alcohol and Other Drugs policy (AOD) in transport depots.

The Road Transport and Distribution and Long Distance Operations Road Safety Remuneration Order 2014 have come into effect and require drug and alcohol testing for drivers of vehicles of 4.5 GVM and over.

Post originally wanted to perform AOD testing on all employees performing “safety sensitive” roles; i.e. PDOs, van drivers, forklift drivers etc.

The NSW CEPU Branch recommended AOD testing should be done on transport drivers. Post agreed to this suggestion. Further discussions will take place on a national level regarding the other “safety sensitive” roles.

AOD testing has been in construction, mining, maritime and airline industries for years. There have been several accidents involving heavy vehicles, which have resulted in serious injuries and fatalities that has brought about this legislation. Community groups now expect heavy vehicle drivers to be tested.

The National Office discussed the Post AOD policy with several key unions who have had a policy in place for years.

In the majority of workplaces covered by these unions if a driver or worker tests positive they are dismissed immediately. In the Post policy drivers are taken through the Employee Counselling and Discipline Policy (ECDP) if they test positive. Key unions saw this as a significant achievement negotiated at the national level.

Further, unions noted that the site supervisor in Post depots will always be tested at each site where testing occurs. This does not happen in these other industries.

Once testing commences in Post transport depots, technicians from the external testing agency Drug and Alcohol Solutions Australia will chose a site and test drivers (chosen randomly) for a 2-hour window.

Transport drivers who have contacted the National Office regarding the policy stated they thought it was only a matter of time before an AOD policy was implemented in Post. They also said that the policy negotiated on the national level was fair and reasonable.

National discussions will commence in the near future regarding the other “safety sensitive” roles in Post. State Branches will be invited to attend these discussions.

#### **4. CWU notifies dispute in FWC on PostConnect**

Last week the CWU National Office filed a dispute notice in the Fair Work Commission (FWC) about Post’s failure to consult the union on proposed changes to PostConnect.

Post told the CWU on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014 of its intention to conduct a review of PostConnect. Only after questions by the union, did Post disclose that the future options for PostConnect.

CWU National Office and State Branch representatives have met with Post on a number of occasions since to discuss the PostConnect review. But Post has refused to provide the information requested by the union.

In response to questions such as, how many companies are Post talking to about a joint venture? are they in fact talking to any companies about a joint venture? Post has nothing to say. We can conclude that option of a joint venture is probably not real. Clearly, Post has information that it is not sharing with its employees and the union.

Post has a duty under the EBA to inform the union of what it is really contemplating in relation to PostConnect. As well, the CWU has a right to influence the decision before it is made which should include options other than sale of PostConnect.

CWU members are very distressed by the lack of information from Post. While there are reports from members about the sale, Post denies this. Any changes will have a significant impact on employees in

PostConnect across Australia. PostConnect employs 109 employees nationally with 98 employees covered by the Post EBA. The majority of jobs are in Vic and NSW. There are a smaller number of employees in Qld, WA and SA. The PostConnect change is not part of the 900 job cuts.

The union is seeking real information and a real opportunity to influence any decision to sell off PostConnect.

#### **5. ‘Permission to pause’ more Post spin**

‘Permission to pause’ is just more Post spin. Workers already have the right to cease or refuse unsafe work. These rights are contained in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the Post OHS Agreement 2013 that was negotiated by the CWU and the Post EBA.

Notwithstanding Post’s latest spin, Postal workers have a right to stop work in certain circumstances. You can also refuse to perform a task if you have a reasonable concern that this work would expose you to a serious risk. This risk must arise from some aspect of the work and it must expose you to an immediate or imminent hazard. Examples may include throwing rolls of carpet above shoulder height into back of a van, violence, falling from height.

When a worker ceases to perform unsafe work they must immediately notify their supervisor/manager (unless they are ceasing because a HSR has ordered the cease work). The worker must make him or herself available for suitable alternative work. ‘Suitable alternative work’ includes safe and healthy work within the worker’s job description/classification.

Under Post's 'permission to pause' you can expect to have a conversation with your supervisor about whether the safety concern was real or perceived! And we know what that will be.

## **6. Staffing for Saturday trading**

Following representations by the CWU national Office Post has agreed to speak again with local CWU officials about the staffing arrangements for Saturday trading, particularly in relation to hatch operations. We have told Post that we are concerned about the safety and security of an employee working alone in hatch operations.

Post now say employees will be advised to close the hatch if they have any concerns about security. As well employees will be told that they should not attempt to lift parcels that are overweight, or of a size that would require a two person lift, even if this means that the parcel cannot be delivered on Saturday. Of course people will still feel pressured to deliver the parcel. Post knows this and uses it to their advantage.

If you are not satisfied with the staffing arrangements at your post office for Saturdays then contact your CWU Branch.

## **7. Compensation claims in Post**

After a number of concerns from members the CWU National Office has raised with Post the issue of the length of time taken to process and determine compensation claims.

Currently there are no time periods specified within the SRC Act in regards to determining claims.

Comcare does have "Determining Authority Key Performance Indicators (DAKPIs) which they monitor for licensees. (Post is a self-insurer /licensee under the SRC Act.) One DAKPI is timeliness to determine new claims, with a target of 20 days for injuries and 60 days for diseases.

Post has advised that it aims to register claims within 10 days and determine claims once registered within 10 days. For claims where further information is required the claims delegates are expected to communicate the reason for the delay in writing and give a revised determination date.

The time period seems reasonable. But the process falls down where further information is required. It may be appropriate to seek further information but injured workers should not be directed unnecessarily to specialists when it is apparent that their injury is work-related.

We will continue to monitor directions to specialists. If you have concerns about a workers' compensation matter contact your State CWU Branch.

## **8. 'Go home on time' day - not at Townsville DC**

Did you 'Go home on time' last week? We know the Townsville Delivery Centre posties in Qld didn't. In fact, the Townsville posties are expected to work unreasonable levels of overtime on a daily basis. The issue of an

unreasonable amount of overtime in Qld DCs has been raised previously by the CWU National Office in the Fair Work Commission on behalf of Qld members. And members won.

The posties in the Townsville DC say they often don't hit the road until after 11.00am due to heavy mail volumes and unaddressed staff shortages. Then they are expected to stay out longer to deliver their own round and the cut-ups of unstaffed rounds.

With temperatures climbing above 30C and 80% humidity they are feeling the effects of fatigue from long work hours. They have raised the issue locally but without resolution. The CWU National Office has raised the matter nationally.

The battle for work-life balance is important with the findings of a report *Walking the Tightrope* released last week by the Australia Institute revealing the average full-time worker is doing six hours of unpaid overtime each week worth an estimated \$9471 a year. Hardworking Australians are 'donating' \$110 billion in free labour each year! The reasons why people are doing more overtime include job insecurity and an expectation from bosses that employees will work longer hours. Research by the School of Population Health at Adelaide University, demonstrates long work hours affected not only the individual but their family.

Last Wednesday, 19 November, was National 'Go Home on Time' day – as declared by Beyond Blue.

## 9. 'Bad Santa' robs post office

A man dressed as Santa robbed cash from a Melbourne Licensed Post Office (LPO) Saturday 15 November.

Reportedly CCTV footage shows the thief bursting into the post office, and stuffing cash into his Santa sack. Police say he then fled the scene in a cream-colored Jeep with stolen license plates.

Nobody was hurt in the incident, according to Victoria police, but the two female LPO workers on duty at the time were terrified.



"They initially thought that he was going to give them some lollies," said Det. Bryan Strangman. "And they were quite shaken when they realized it was a robbery."

Victoria police are asking the public to come forward with any information about the man.

Source: 9News

## 10. Australian Unions *Our Living Standards, Our Voice* survey

The ACTU has recently we launched [an incredibly important survey](#) that union members -- just like you -- are taking part in all across Australia.

Thousands of Australians have had their say about current frustrations and what sort of a future they want to see. The survey takes about 15 minutes and will help guide the strategic direction of our movement as we face down Tony Abbott and his unfair agenda.

By adding your voice, you'll [help shape the vision for the future of our country](#) and campaigns that will turn that vision into reality.

Don't forget to enter your details at the end to go into the running to win a 16GB iPad Mini (valued at \$299 RRP).

**We welcome your comments and contributions –  
send us an email and let us know what you think via [cwu@cwu.org.au](mailto:cwu@cwu.org.au)  
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