

E-BULLETIN **Postal**

#1. Friday, 7 February 2014



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1. **Star Track Express workers gifted \$250**

Australia Post's CEO & MD Ahmed Fahour reportedly paid \$250 to Star Track Express workers as a gift last Christmas.

No doubt they worked hard and deserved it.

But you have worked hard all year too and deserve a share of the profits.

If correct this is another slap in the face for postal workers.

We have written to the Australia Post boss about this matter but have not received a response as yet.



2. **Price on daily delivery draws ire of CWU**

Is having daily mail worth paying \$30 for? That's the question posed by Australia Post in an online survey of customers that has drawn the ire of your union, the CWU.

"Putting a price on daily delivery will kill postal services," CWU Assistant National Secretary, Martin O'Nea said. "Reducing services would lead to mail volumes falling off the edge of a cliff."

Australia Post workers once again generated hundreds of millions in profit last year (\$312 million) which was then distributed in the form of dividends to the Government and a bonus for Ahmed Fahour (more than \$2 million last year).

The traditional mail service still delivered 4 billion articles last year.

Australia Post says "the survey is not an indication of what might or might not be implemented in the future." This is especially convoluted language. Someone is thinking about cutting daily mail services. If not then why pose the question in the first place?

This could mean thousands of job losses especially in rural Australia. The CWU will fight back against unilateral decisions by Australia Post management to cut delivery services.

The CWU has called on Ahmed Fahour to publicly commit to current services or step aside to make way for somebody who is up to the challenge.

3. CWU says no to privatisation

The CWU has made a submission to the federal government's Commission of Audit which is considering how to sell off Commonwealth government assets and slash spending.

Australia Post belongs to the Australian public and should have public service as its priority.

Our vision for the future is existing services are maintained and decent meaningful jobs are maximised.

Our submission sets out a plan to secure Australia Post's long term viability by capturing the growth in parcel delivery and offering new and innovative services such as banking, insurance and communication services.

We will work with community groups, pensioners, the labour movement, politicians and everyone to fight back against any proposal to privatise Australia Post, CWU Assistant National Secretary, Martin O'Nea said.

Any proposal to privatise Australia Post would attract opposition from metropolitan areas and the bush in particular, where the local post office can be the mainstay of a small town, Martin said.

Other postal services are addressing the problem of declining letter volumes by introducing new revenue generating services such as postal banking, financial services and expansion of their parcel business.

Your union is ready and capable of meeting the challenge of saying no to privatisation and defending your jobs.

4. Post try it on again

Sick before or after a public holiday

You worked hard until Xmas and beyond. You dealt with the queues. You did the overtime. You delivered the mail and parcels. And you have since delivered and worked in excessive heat. Now the CEO wants to reward you - with a stick!

You are not allowed to get sick or injured on either side of Australia Day.

If so you will be punished with the loss of a day's pay! Post has tried this on before.

It is not a requirement that you produce a certificate if you are ill or injured. If it is convenient to get a certificate, then get one. But if you are threatened with loss of pay, we will take the matter to the appropriate jurisdiction and make Post pay. The HR Manual is not the law!

Post is misleading you with: Unplanned Leave and Public Holidays - A reminder to all staff that if you take unplanned leave on either side of the Australia Day Public Holiday you will be required to produce the appropriate documentation associated with that leave ie. Medical Certificate or Stat Dec. - If an employee takes unplanned leave and fails to produce the required documentation, then it will be processed as Leave Without Pay.

5. Another Post try on

Sick leave reporting

It seems that Australia Post is again trying to unilaterally change sick leave reporting requirements so as to harass people when they take unplanned absences due to illness or carer's responsibilities.

The scheme requires workers to contact a private company to report an unplanned absence. You are then asked for your name, date of birth, workplace, reason for absence, how long you will be absent, and told how to manage your illness, presumably to harass you back to work regardless of whether you are ready to return or not.

Members who have contacted the union rightly complain that reporting an unplanned absence or carer's leave to a private company is absolutely ridiculous.

Post has tried this on before.

It is not a requirement that you report an unplanned absence to a private company. Under the enterprise agreement, the manager or another appropriate employee must be informed prior to the commencement of duty, if practicable. If not practicable then the employee shall notify the employer at the first opportunity on the day of the absence.

6. Time for implementing the OHS agreement

There are two key principles in the new Australia Post OHS agreement - consultation and risk control.

Australia Post must consult you and your elected HSRs and your union on identifying health and safety risks in the workplace and how to eliminate hazards. Or if that's not possible, control a hazard.

Consultation and worker representation is achieved by negotiating the electoral boundaries for HSRs. That is negotiating the Work Groups, the number of HSRs per Work Group and Deputy HSRs.

How an election is conducted is determined by work group members. HSRs and Deputy HSRs are entitled to attend an initial five day accredited training course and a 1 day refresher course each year. Your union conducts training for HSRs that you are able to attend.

Australia Post must consult on changes that may affect your health and safety. In trying to resolve a health and safety issue workers may be represented by their union.

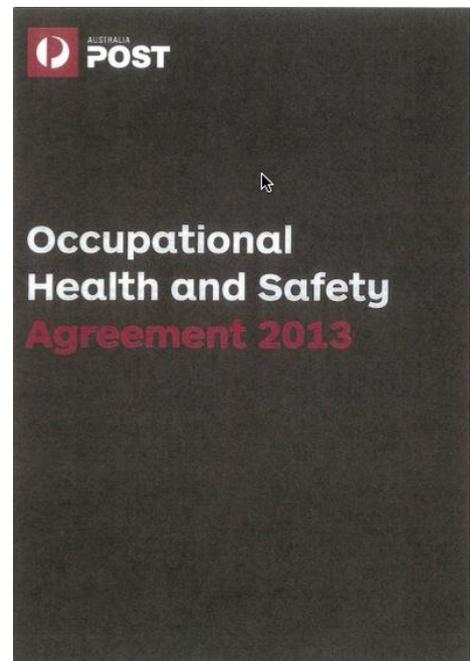
The new OHS agreement contains a number of rights for workers, HSRs and your union to have a say in health and safety and fixing health and safety hazards.

A copy of the agreement will be available on our website in the next week or so. See www.cwu.org.au

7. Keep Australia Post in hands of the public

The following is an opinion piece from the Courier Mail by Terry Sweetman, 31 January 2014.

YOU are possibly not aware that when tying a mailbag the approved twine must be wrapped around it a prescribed number of times (eight, from memory) before being passed through the lead seal.



That was one of the odd rules in the Postmaster General's Department when I was doing holiday deliveries more than 50 years ago.

The PMG was full of pettifogging regulations like that (maybe Australia Post still is) but they made sure the mail got through with the minimum of delay and the maximum of security.

Gone are the cruelly clunky PMG bikes but, still, I can rely on a person on a motorcycle to deliver the mail at roughly the same time every weekday.

It was a good service and it remains a good service, even if we use parts of it less and less.

Would a privatised Australia Post provide a better service? Would it provide as good a service?



I've heard the arguments for economic efficiency and I have nodded wisely over the ideological purity of government divesting itself of business interests.

But I've heard little about the quality of service that might be provided to us, the people who have owned the PMG since 1901 (and its colonial predecessors) and now Australia Post.

The sale of Australia Post would put \$3 billion in the Government's pocket (once), not even enough to fund its paid parental scheme for a year.

For that, the Government would forgo a \$244 million annual dividend (in the last reporting period).

For its \$3 billion, the buyer would enjoy revenues of \$5.8 billion and after-tax profits of \$312 million.

And these numbers are generally on the up and up, according to annual reports.

The red in the books is a \$187 million loss on its mail business. But "non regulated" parcels and retail services are going gangbusters, keeping Australia Post well in the black and paying handsome dividends (to us).

It does damned well in the competitive world of parcel delivery, which puts paid to any notions of the intrinsic inefficiency of government enterprises.

Somebody who purports to know these things reckons that a \$3 billion sale price on those sorts of revenues, profits and considerable assets would represent a very generous price-earnings multiple.

If the Communication Workers Union had its way and Australia Post were to be provided with a banking licence, its 4429 retail outlets - 60 per cent of them in rural and regional Australia - could make it a goldmine.

It could become the earner it would have been had the government not split it from what became Telstra.

It might be the earner it could have been if the National Broadband Network were an adjunct rather than a cannibal cousin that threatens to devour its remaining letter trade.

It's a good buy but could or would private enterprise maintain the sort of community service obligations under which Australia Post labours?

A curious government might ask how it can now offer a differential rate for pensioners while lifting the basic stamp price by 10¢.

A cautious public might ask the price private enterprise might levy to address the letter business bleed off.

And Australia Post's performance standards have to meet the social, industrial and commercial needs of the community, which is why it has at least 10,000 street post boxes and must deliver within set time limits.

Somehow, I would prefer those community needs be met by the sort of people who worry about the number of turns around a mailbag than those who fret exclusively about the bottom line of a balance sheet.

And, how long would those service obligations survive if Australia Post were to become privatised but be deemed to be too big to be allowed to fail?

Witness the growing pressure to water down the local ownership rules in a desperate Qantas and see how quickly the best of national intentions could give way to sheer survival.

The issue has bubbled to the surface since the Federal Government's Audit Commission refused to rule out privatisation of Australia Post. It was berley in the water for the Business Council of Australia (the president of which, Tony Shepherd, is also chair of the audit commission), which concluded continued public ownership was a waste of taxpayer dollars.

One body is about cutting costs and the other is about making a buck for business. Neither is about providing a service to the public.

But, seriously, is the takeover of long-established, efficient, profitable and valuable institutions the best that capital can do for the nation?

8. Abbott government set to broaden attack on wages and conditions.

Back in 2012, Tony Abbott declared that he was the Australian workers' best friend.

But it has not taken long for his government to show its true colours.

Its "hands off" approach to the ongoing decline of Australian manufacturing will mean the loss of tens of thousands of jobs.

And judging from its submission to the Fair Work Commission's review of modern awards, the Coalition is aiming for a reduction of working conditions for all and any award-based workers.

According to the government, the Commission should consider whether certain minimum terms and conditions, including penalty rates, "are still relevant" in "modern workplaces".

This is an echo of the common argument put by the hospitality and retail industries that weekends are really a thing of the past so there is no need to pay compensation for those who work on Saturday and Sunday.

(A strange position for a government whose leader and Minister for Employment are both regular church goers.)

The Government also calls on the Commission to consider current economic conditions and "the impact of employment costs on employers' decisions to hire" when reviewing awards and their related minimum wage rate schedules.

This is code for across the board cuts to wages and entitlements.

Minister for Employment, Eric Abetz, has said that any decisions about the future of penalty rates and other minimum conditions are entirely a matter for the Commission. But there can be no doubt about the signals being sent.

They coincide with an increasingly aggressive campaign by government and sections of the media against employee organisations – the unions – designed ultimately to weaken workers’ ability to defend their living standards.

Whatever your view of the last Labor government, CWU members should be under no illusions about the Coalition’s agenda. Get set for a rough ride in 2014 and beyond.

9. Richest 85 boast same wealth as half the world

Eighty-five people control the same amount of wealth as half the world's population.

That is 85 people compared with 3.5 billion.

A new report from Oxfam has been published in time for the World Economic Forum in Davos this week. The report, *Working for the Few*, shows that the wealth of the world is divided in two: almost half going to the richest one per cent, the other half to the remaining 99 per cent.

Oxfam Australia Chief Executive Dr. Helen Szoke said the report outlined that extreme economic inequality was rapidly increasing in the majority of countries. She said widening inequality was helping the richest undermine democratic processes and drive policies that promoted their interests at the expense of everyone else.

“In developed and developing countries alike, the lowest tax rates, the best health and education and the opportunity to influence are being given to the rich and their children,” Dr. Szoke said. “The impact of extreme inequality is most keenly felt in developing countries where missing out means remaining trapped in the cycle of extreme poverty. But such deep inequality is not inevitable, and it can and must be reversed quickly.”

Oxfam’s report shows that globally, the richest individuals and companies hide trillions of dollars away from the tax office in a web of tax havens around the world. It’s estimated that \$21 trillion (US \$18.5 trillion) is held unrecorded and off shore.

Oxfam is urging Australia and other governments to crack down on tax havens and halt tax avoidance and evasion which leads to developing countries missing out on important revenues to combat poverty and drive economic growth.

“Tony Abbott is in a prime position to help reduce extreme inequality and poverty globally as Australia prepares to host the leaders of G20 nations this year.”



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**We welcome your comments and contributions –
send us an email and let us know what you think via cwu@cwu.org.au
Check out our webpage at www.cwu.org.au**