

# E-BULLETIN **Postal**

#9. Friday, 6 June 2014



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## 1. Abbott government rules out privatisation of Australia Post

The privatisation battle is won for the moment. The focus now is protecting services from being slashed and move to reduce the Community Service Obligations by the CEO Ahmed Fahour.

A big pat on the back to all members who have been campaigning and a warm thanks to the community groups who have lent their support. The struggle continues.



**Below is an article from the Sydney Morning Herald:**

*Federal Finance Minister Mathias Cormann says the Abbott government will not sell Australia Post, however it will proceed with the sale of the Royal Australian Mint.*

*There has been increasing speculation about the possible sale of the iconic postal delivery service after Treasurer Joe Hockey earlier this year left open the possibility of the privatisation of Australia Post.*

*Earlier this month Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chairman [Rod Sims](#) urged the [government](#) to sell assets to increase productivity, and former ACCC commissioner Stephen King came out strongly in favour of a sale of Australia Post.*

*The government's Commission of Audit report - released earlier this month - also recommended it be sold, along with the Royal Australian Mint and several others publicly owned assets.*

*"We have decided not to proceed with the sale of Australia Post," Senator Cormann told Senate estimates on Wednesday.*

*"We have [also] decided not to proceed with the sale of ASC [formerly the Australian Submarine Corporation]."*

*However, Senator Cormann said the government was pushing ahead with the sale of the Royal Australian Mint and Australian Hearing.*

*It would also proceed with a scoping study into the potential sale of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission business registry arm, which was not a Commission of Audit recommendation.*

*The Audit Commission laid down timetables for the sale of Snowy Hydro, the National Electricity Market, Australian Hearing, the Defence Housing Authority, and the Australia Submarine Corporation.*

*It also said the privatisation of the NBN, the Australian Rail Track Corporation and Comcar should be considered.*

*The news will come as a relief for those who have been calling for Australia Post to remain in government hands.*

*Labor and the unions have argued the company provides a vital service in rural and regional communities and warn if the company were privatised those services could be lost.*

*University of Queensland economist John Quiggin has opposed the sale of Australia Post, saying the results of the sales of Telstra, Qantas and Sydney Airport had been poor.*

*"In general, the price received for assets has been less than their value in continued public ownership."*

## **2. Manual handling risks at top of union agenda in parcels expansion facilities**

Readers will be aware of the hundreds of millions of dollars that Australia Post has spent or are investing in new parcel sorting machinery at dedicated facilities in Melbourne and Sydney. Unfortunately, despite numerous requests to engineer out all manual handling risks, Australia Post is still dragging the chain and talking about "administrative controls".

The contentious area still under discussion is the "bull ring" take-off array that will be processing the majority of large and heavy parcels at the new facilities in Melbourne and Sydney. Current Safe Operating Procedures (SOPs) involve removing gates from ULDs and suggest two people lift a heavy/oversize parcel together and walk into the ULD and then both bend knees and place parcel down. This is a physical impossibility in a ULD that is only a meter wide. These SOPs are "administrative controls".



Due to the nature of the new parcel sorting equipment, smaller/lighter parcels will not make it to the bull ring array as these will be placed into bags/ ULDs without being physically handled by staff. Many Parcels will also be sent direct to loose load. Obviously this will result in the majority of parcels sent to the bull ring array being larger and heavier parcels.

Australia Post finally acknowledged this at the last National Consultative meeting. Your union has suggested ceiling attached vacuum lifters as shown below:

<http://www.vaculex.com/References/VideosYoutube/SortingbetweenCagesPalletsandConveyors.aspx>

At this stage Australia Post seem very reluctant to introduce such a system but with nearly 2 million cases of wine processed through Melbourne and Sydney every year, not to mention parcels containing goods such as brake disks and up to 30 or so books weighing close to 32kgs all being processed through the bull ring, a solution that eliminates manual handling risks is required.

The machinery is due to go online later this year so action is needed as soon as possible. Another meeting is scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup> and readers will be kept informed of developments. If agreement is unable to be reached soon we will be examining all options.

### 3. Australia Post's OHS performance – how safe are your jobs?

Certain incidents defined by the WHS legislation are notifiable immediately to Comcare. In the last 9 months AP has had 38 incidents that are serious/critical and dangerous in nature and have been notified to Comcare. These incidents include electric shock, amputation of top of finger, heat stress, lacerations, muscle/tendon strain, fall from racking and motorcycle PDOs struck by cars and trucks.

There are many other less serious incidents resulting from 'minor' incidents or near misses that are not reported to Comcare. These include bitten by dog, slips trips and falls, hit by moving object such as forklift and so on. Not notifiable immediately to Comcare but serious for the injured worker.

Manual handling (lifting, pushing, pulling and carrying of objects) is responsible for the greatest number of injuries and long term health problems amongst AP employees. These injuries occur because of lifting heavy and awkward objects. Many injuries also occur because workers are forced to adopt injurious postures due to poor design of machines, the materials handling equipment or the way the work is organised.

Motorcycle accidents are responsible for the second greatest number of injuries amongst AP employees followed by being hit by falling/moving objects and slips, trips and falls.

Some of the things AP are doing include programs directed at managers (Safety leadership), encouraging workers to be safety conscious (Stop Think Do) and stricter safety rules (workers coded for incidents). But improvements in workers' health and safety are predominantly achieved by collective action to improve conditions rather than by these kinds of programs aimed at personal changes in behavior or lifestyle.

**Unsafe work conditions can be changed.** Workers have a right to a safe work process. Health and safety is a legitimate union issue. Contact your HSR, CWU Delegate or CWU branch or national office about how to reduce the hazards in your workplace. (See the action plan for HSRs below in this bulletin for some ideas as well.)

### 4. Lifting and carrying in the Post Office

Australia Post workers in Post Offices are bearing the brunt of dealing with heavy parcels.

Large bulk parcels are accepted over the counter and heavy parcels are carded back to Post Offices after failed attempt to deliver to costumers. Post Offices have no room to store parcels. Installation of shelving has assisted. But parcels still have to be moved and lifted onto shelves (where they exist). Last financial year (2012-13) lost time injuries increased by 14% in AP Retail in Vic.

In the age of online shopping AP's parcel business continues to experience strong volume and revenue growth. Across the country Post Offices are being altered to optimise parcel delivery service to customers. We all support increasing foot traffic into Post Offices but AP needs to eliminate or, at least, minimise exposure to heavy lifting and carrying.

If you want a safer workplace then start by electing HSRs and setting up local health and safety committees. If you would like some help with this contact your union.

Your help is needed to address this matter. Please give us information about your workplace on the following:

- Do you have to lift heavy parcels?
- Do you have to carry heavy parcels?
- Do you have to push or drag heavy parcels?

- Is there any lifting equipment in your post office?
- Are workers trained in the use and maintenance of lifting equipment?

We can use your general information in our arguments at the national level.

## 5. Action plan for Health and Safety Representatives

Use the checklist below to get started if you have just been elected or if you have been in the job for a while, use it as a resource to check your progress.

Have you:

- Enrolled in the 5 day HSR training if you have just been elected or the 1 day HSR update if you have completed the 5 days training? HSRs may choose to do their training with the union. Union delivered HSR training is important.
- Established contact with your local CWU Delegate and CWU Organiser?
- Publicised your role? AP is required to display a current list of HSRs at the workplace. The list should be readily accessible to workers in the Work Group.
- Organised your facilities? HSRs have a right to resources and facilities that are reasonably necessary to carry out their role e.g. phone computer photocopying.
- Established contact with other HSRs in your workplace and made arrangements for regular get together?
- Set up a local health and safety committee in your Work Group? At least half the membership of the committee must be worker representatives. The committee must meet at least every 3 months as well as at any reasonable time when requested by members of the committee.
- Set up consultative arrangements with your manager to keep you regularly informed of health and safety issues in your Work group?
- Carried out a workplace inspection? Set in place process for regular inspections?
- Set priorities for action based on identified hazards and safety problems?

If you would like some help with any of the above or how to deal with a health and safety issue contact your union.

## 6. Review of forms and process for recording actual ROM times

The retail back office working party is due to meet shortly to review the changes to the forms and the process for recording actual ROM times. If your post office has been ROMed recently you should have used the new forms and process. Your comments about the forms and process are requested to help us with the review. If your post office was ROMed without using the new forms and process or if area managers are still refusing to accept actual times as opposed to AP's wished for times then we also need to hear from you. You can let us know what you think via email to [cwu@cwu.org.au](mailto:cwu@cwu.org.au)

## 7. Three percent minimum wage rise inadequate, say unions



The Fair Work Commission's minimum wage panel has raised the minimum wage for award-based workers by \$18.70 a week – a rise of 3% over the existing level.

But unions, who argued for a \$27 increase this time around, say the rise won't do enough to close the gap and stop the emergence of a US-style working poor.

In announcing the decision, FWC President Iain Ross acknowledged that the slow growth in the real value of award wages and the decline of the living standards of award-reliant workers relative to other employees was one of the key factors in granting a real increase in the minimum wage.

Indeed, only twenty years ago Australia's minimum wage was the highest in the OECD at nearly 60% of average full time wages. Prior to this decision it was just 43.3% - the lowest proportion on record.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said that the latest rise won't do enough to reverse the trend.

"Today's decision means that low paid workers including cleaners, retail and hospitality staff, child care workers, farm labourers, and factory workers will fall even further behind the rest of the workforce," he said.

## 8. Unions call for clarity on asbestos agency future

Unions have called on the Abbott government to come clean on its plans for the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency.

The call follows the release of a paper by Finance Minister, Mathias Cormann, that lists the agency under the heading "Misuse of separate bodies for public relations purposes". Such agencies, according to the paper, merely provide "window dressing" for political purposes.

"This is completely incorrect," ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said, "and ignores the shocking local death toll and great suffering of so many Australians who have been exposed to asbestos."



Australia has the highest per capita rate of asbestos disease in the world with almost 34,000 people suffering and dying since 1980 as a result of asbestos exposure.

The Agency provides a consistent, coordinated national approach to asbestos removal and eradication with a view to improving safety for workers, renovators and anyone else who might come into contact with the asbestos dust.

When it was established by the Labor party the move was supported by then then Opposition, including now Prime Minister, Tony Abbott and the now, Employment Minister Eric Abetz. But the Agency was targeted by the Government's Commission of Inquiry which recommended it be axed.

CWU members are among those workers who are at risk from exposure to asbestos because of its presence in telecommunications infrastructure as well as in domestic premises. There are a number of AP facilities that have asbestos containing material (ACM). A register should be available at each facility identifying any ACM or with a statement 'no ACM has been identified within this facility'.

The union believes that the Abbott Government should explain its plans for the future of Australia's Safety and Eradication Agency immediately.



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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](mailto:cwu@cwu.org.au)  
Check out our webpage at [www.cwu.org.au](http://www.cwu.org.au)