

# E-BULLETIN Telecommunications

## #12. Friday, 17 July 2015

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### 1. CWU national election results declared

The results of the recent national CWU elections were officially declared on 9 July. A link to the full results can be found at the national website [www.cwu.org.au](http://www.cwu.org.au).

The elections will see a new group take office at the national level as from 1 August, headed by the new Divisional Secretary-elect, Greg Rayner.

Greg is a member of the NSW Postal and Telecommunications Branch of the CWU, having represented transport workers in Australia Post over many years.



A statement by outgoing Divisional Secretary, Dan Dwyer, will be posted on the national website shortly.

### 2. Optus flags new redundancies

Optus has advised the CWU of a new round of redundancies in its Networks area. The redundancies will affect staff working in Next Generation VAS, Mobile Deployment, the Program Portfolio and Governance Office and Fixed Networks Delivery.



Optus says the redundancies flow from its ongoing attempts to create more efficiencies across its network operations through “centralisation and standardisation” of certain functions as well as through removal of duplication.

Approximately 18 roles will be affected with the redundancies scheduled to take effect on 23 July. Of these approximately 14 are covered by the Optus Employment Partnership Agreement 2012. These roles are spread across New South Wales (13), Victoria (2) and Queensland (3).

Optus says that none of the jobs affected are being sent offshore and that it will attempt to identify redeployment opportunities for these employees. The CWU has asked to be informed about the degree to which this does in fact lead to successful redeployment.

CWU members affected by these redundancies and wanting information and/or support in relation to redundancy and redeployment should contact their state branch.

### 3. nbn agreement approved by FWC

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has approved a new enterprise agreement covering technical staff at nbn.

The agreement was one of four recently voted on by nbn staff, each covering different sections of the workforce and involving different unions. Of the four, three were voted up by nbn employees and one, covering professional staff, was rejected.

These three agreements were among the first actually voted up by employees affected by the Abbott government's new rules for bargaining in the Commonwealth public sector.

Those rules have seen Commonwealth employees faced with the prospect of accepting cuts to conditions in return for meagre pay rises, with pay offers not even matching inflation.

Not surprisingly, many have opted for industrial action rather than accept the government's terms.

The main difference in the nbn situation, at least with the technical staff agreement, was that while the pay rise was low - 4.5% over 3 years - no major changes to employee conditions were involved. Employees had also already gone a year without a pay rise and knew that the government's policy was a complete ban on back pay.

Given this situation employees clearly decided to take what was on the table and live to fight another day.

All the nbn agreements were put out for a vote before union negotiations had been concluded. For this reason and because of the low wage rise, the CWU advised its members that it could not recommend that they accept the agreement. Now that employees have spoken, however, the union has applied to be covered by the agreement.

### 4. Telstra reports on NBN training

At the end of June, the CWU met with Telstra for the quarterly briefing on implementation of the NBN-related training programme which is being funded by the Commonwealth government.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of the other Telstra unions and of the Department of Communications.



Telstra reported that, as might be expected, the largest area of training remains in NBN-related installations.

However, training has also now commenced in areas related to Telstra's NBN design contracts ie in FTTN design, field inspection and network planning. Some 72 employees have received training in these areas over the last 6 months.

A further area of training has been in functions related to the transit network which is leased from Telstra by nbn.



Telstra Service Operations (TSO) staff are now involved in monitoring this network and 42 have been trained in relevant functions so far this year. Future TSO training will also cover escalated assurance in relation to voice services over the NBN.

Training for Telstra Wholesale staff dealing with the processing of NBN orders is due to commence this month.

Telstra's reported that only small numbers of employees had recently received training in delivery of its Digital Home services and that this reflected difficulties in getting release for those eligible. This has been an ongoing issue for field staff and reflects Telstra's difficulties in meeting demand in the wake of ongoing redundancies.

Obviously, employees should not be paying for Telstra's mismanagement by missing out on training opportunities. Members having trouble getting release for training should contact their state branch.

## 5. Free Trade Agreements mean fewer Australian jobs say unions

Easing of entry requirements for overseas workers will mean fewer jobs for Australians, unions claim.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is warning that free trade deals with China and, in future, India will mean that both local and international employers operating in Australia will have easier access to cheap labour.

In particular, the relaxing of current "market testing" requirements will mean that it will be easier for employers to bring workers into the country on temporary work (457) visas.

Market testing rules may require employers to show that they have not been able to find local workers for a job before they can apply to bring in labour from overseas.

Already, only about a third of successful 457 applications required market testing. The ACTU estimates that under agreements such as the recently signed China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that proportion could sink to 25%.

Under new Investment Facilitation Agreements in the China FTA, companies with projects worth more than \$150 million will also be able to negotiate to bring in lower-skilled workers at wage rates that fall below the current wage floor for the standard 457 visa program of \$53,990 per annum.

Telecommunications projects are specifically mentioned in the China FTA as falling into this category.

ACTU President, Ged Kearney says that Australia's temporary visa system is reaching crisis point and instead of fixing the abuse and exploitation, the Abbott Government is making it easier for companies to bring in temporary workers at the expense of local jobs.

"Our temporary visa system needs more regulation to protect job and training opportunities for Australian workers, not less," she said.



## 6. UK government introduces new anti-union laws

In a sign of the times, the Conservative UK government has introduced new anti-union legislation said to be the worst since the Thatcher era 30 years ago.

The proposed laws will impose new limits on the ability of workers to take strike action. The Trade Union Bill will also introduce tougher laws for picketing, greater regulation of unions, and enable union members to opt in or out of paying subscriptions to political activities, like supporting the Labour Party.

Under the proposed amendments to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 strike ballots will have to meet a "turnout requirement" of 50% of union members eligible to vote.



***Birds of a feather. Conservative leaders in both the UK and Australia want to weaken the entire labour movement.***

This requirement already applies in Australia of course but the UK bill will introduce a further and much higher threshold for workers in certain industries, including health, education, firefighting, transport, border security and energy.

Industrial action will only be legal in these areas if ballots achieve a turnout of at least 50%, plus 40% support from all eligible union members.

In other words at least 400 workers out of a group of 1000 would have to vote YES, not just a simple majority of the 50% (or more) who participated in the ballot (e.g. 251+).

The Trade Union Bill also seeks to:

- remove the current prohibition on labour hire companies providing replacement labour during strikes;
- impose a four-month time limit for industrial action, so that mandates are always recent;
- require all unions, not just those affiliated to UK Labour Party, to ask each existing member whether they wish to "opt-in" to pay political levies and then repeat the question every five years.

The move against political donations is in line with recent moves in NSW to try to limit the amount unions can contribute to election campaigns. To date these moves have been unsuccessful but they can be expected to be given a new lease of life by the current Royal Commission into unions whose purpose is, among other things, to weaken the support the ALP receives from the Australian union movement.

Source: Workplace Express.



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