

E-BULLETIN Telecommunications

#6. Friday, 24 April 2015

1. Telstra EA negotiations underway soon.
2. Telstra wants new shift work system for Workflow employees.
3. Shift loadings or overtime? Optus wants two bob each way.
4. NBN Co preparing to bypass unions on EA.
5. Government moves to sideline unions from national training bodies.
6. Remembering injured workers.
7. May Day 2015
8. Two years since the Rana Plaza tragedy: victims still waiting for compensation.

1. Telstra EA negotiations underway soon

The CWU and other Telstra unions are finalising preparations for the beginning of Enterprise Agreement (EA) negotiations next month.

Your union is your bargaining representative.

While no definite start dates have as yet been set, the CWU expects that initial discussions are likely to be held in mid-May. Prior to that Telstra will have to notify employees formally of its intention to start bargaining and explain the bargaining rights you have under the *Fair Work Act*.



The main thing for CWU members to be clear about at this stage is that your union is **automatically** your bargaining representative in these negotiations – unless you specifically choose otherwise.

So there is no need for you to nominate a bargaining representative yourself.

Still time to have your say.

Once bargaining officially starts, the CWU and other unions will be presenting Telstra with their claims – and we will hear from Telstra about theirs! Over the last few months, the views of CWU members on the content of the EA have been expressed through membership surveys, face-to-face meetings and through direct communications back to the E-bulletin.

As previously reported, “headline” issues identified by members have been retention of the 80 weeks redundancy entitlement and leave entitlements; availability of RDOs; performance monitoring and assessment; wage rises. Some more specific issues around classification structures have also recently been raised with the union.

It is still not too late to raise any other matters you want dealt with in the EA. Fill out the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NL6WTTG> or contact your state branch or write directly to the National Office via the E-bulletin at cwu@cwu.org.au.

2. Telstra wants new shift work system for Workflow employees

Telstra has told the CWU that it proposes to introduce new shift work arrangements for Workflow employees.

Workflow currently operates on a 7 day a week basis, with some employees engaged as shift workers and others working ordinary hours plus overtime. Telstra says it now wants to introduce shift work at all Workflow sites so as to create a “consistent operating model” nationally.

The CWU met with Telstra on 21 April to discuss details of the proposal. We indicated that one major problem was the creation of rosters which did not appear to allow staff any two consecutive days off work.

More generally, the union questioned whether the proposal was in line with the current Enterprise Agreement which clearly states that “an employee who is not a shift worker can’t be required by Telstra to become a shift worker” (p.13).



At the meeting Telstra emphasised that the new arrangements would be voluntary. But its written advice to the union states that the proposals as it stands assumes that all affected employees will, in fact, volunteer!

A further meeting with Telstra is scheduled for Monday 27 April. Members will be informed of developments. Meanwhile, members should note that participation in these proposed changes is strictly voluntary.

3. Shift loadings or overtime? Optus wants two bob each way

The CWU is investigating what appear to be attempts by Optus to reclassify employees as shift workers to avoid paying them overtime.

Members in the company’s satellite section reported that they were approached by management to sign forms consenting to the change after concerns were raised by employees that they were not being paid overtime for work outside their ordinary hours.



Employees employed to work on an ordinary (“core”) hours basis were being routinely required to work beyond the 7am-7pm span without compensation i.e. to work unpaid overtime.

Employees were also told that irrespective of when they worked, they were not eligible for overtime payments unless they had worked more than their standard 38 hour week.

Optus now seems to want to try to “solve” the problem by turning the employees into shift workers on the basis that they would then be eligible for shift loadings. But it may not suit them to become shift workers – and anyway that doesn’t deal with the backlog of unpaid overtime.

The CWU met with members and other affected Optus staff at the Belrose satellite facility on 21 April. Following the meeting, the CWU wrote to Optus seeking that:

1. That Optus conduct a full audit and investigation into the alleged breach of the EPA at the Belrose facility.
2. That any outstanding moneys owed to employees for non-payment of overtime be paid in full.
3. That Optus stop its attempts to alter the working conditions of staff employed at Belrose.

The CWU will meet with Optus on this matter on 24 April. Members will be kept up to date with developments.

4. NBN Co preparing to bypass unions on EA

NBN Co has confirmed that it is preparing to put a number of proposed Enterprise Agreements (EAs) out to employees for a vote despite the fact that no agreement has been reached with their representatives, the unions.

NBN Co has a number of separate EAs, each negotiated with a different union and covering a different operational area.

What the proposed new EAs all have in common, however, is the fact they reflect the federal government's "no pain, no gain" policy for Commonwealth employees i.e. no wage rise without cuts to conditions, and even then not much of a rise anyway.



It is this policy, not employee's or unions' unreasonable demands, that has sabotaged EA negotiations.

The CWU has not yet sighted the proposed EA for technical employees but expects to do so next week. It will then be consulting with members about our response to the "offer".

5. Government moves to sideline unions from national training bodies

Representatives of employees and trainees will not be guaranteed a role in new vocational training arrangements being introduced by the federal government.

On 21 April, the government announced major changes to vocational training structures which it says are designed to ensure "industry" is put into the driver's seat in the training system.

But while "industry", as defined by the Abbott government, clearly includes employers and employer groups, it doesn't necessarily mean the people who work in a sector or those who represent them.

There is certainly no mention of unions in the government's blueprint for the training future.



This is despite the fact that it was the union movement, together with the Hawke/Keating Labor governments, which developed the current world-class vocational training system in the first place.

And it has been unions, not employers, who have consistently argued for the importance of creating the highly skilled workforce Australia needs if it is to avoid becoming a low wage, low productivity economy this century.

ACTU President Ged Kearney has called on the Abbott government to guarantee that the proposed new vocational training arrangements provide for genuine representation from all sides of industry, including fair representation of the interests of workers.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said: “The proposed new Industry Reference Committees and the Australian Industry Skills Committee announced today must include genuine representation from all sides of industry, including fair representation of the interests of workers.”

6. Remembering injured workers

On 25 April, tens of thousands of Australians can be expected to turn out to ceremonies to remember those killed and injured in war, especially during WWI.

But there is another “war” that is going on in Australia each and every year - sometimes dramatically, sometimes silently. Its battlegrounds are unsafe workplaces and unsafe work practices and its victims are the thousands of Australians who are injured, often fatally, in the course of going about their ordinary working lives.



The National Workers' Memorial in Canberra was erected in memory of those killed and injured at work.

Already this year, 44 Australians have died as a result of accidents at work.

Over the last decade, the average number has been over 300. Each year, thousands more die of work-related illnesses like cancer and mesothelioma.

April 28 is the day when such workers are remembered, both in Australia and internationally. And it is a day when the labour movement recommits to fighting

for stronger health and safety protections.

Check out your local trades and labour council for information about activities in your state or contact your state CWU branch for information.

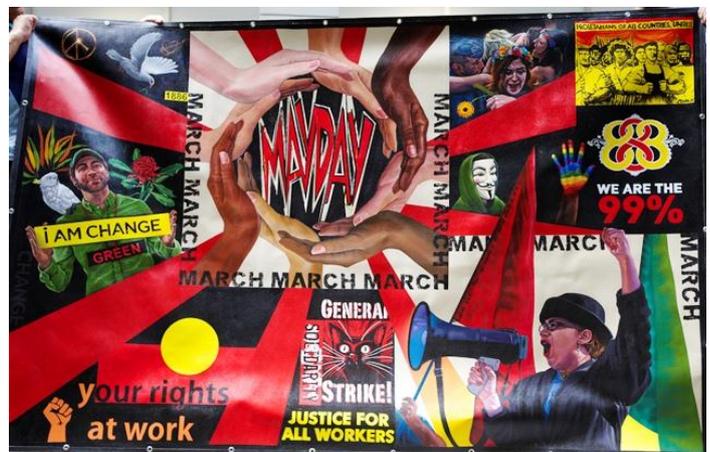
7. May Day 2015

May Day, the international workers' day, is coming around again.

This year it falls on a Friday but in most states it will be celebrated on the weekend, on either the 2nd or 3rd May.

Either way, there will be a march or event in your state to mark the occasion. Check your local trades and labour council for details.

May Day has been celebrated as a workers' day since the late 19th century and has its origins in the struggle for the 8 hour working day, especially that conducted in the United States during the 1880s.



In 1886, thousands of workers across the US walked off the job to march in support of the 8 hour day claim. The movement was violently suppressed but not before it had inspired an international movement in support of the struggle for shorter working hours and decent working conditions.

Today workers remember both these early struggles and more recent ones in defence of the interests of working people and their rights to live decent, healthy and rewarding lives.

Remember, the rights we enjoy today were won, not handed over by the employers out of the goodness of their hearts. That is the message of May Day.

8. Two years since the Rana Plaza tragedy: victims still waiting for compensation

On 24 April it was two years since the Rana Plaza building collapsed in Bangladesh, killing more than 1,100 garment workers and injuring thousands more.

But despite a strong campaign by the international labour movement and its NGO partners, victims have still not been fully compensated and workers continue to be exposed to unacceptable risks. Unions say that not a single factory in the country can be called 100% safe.



Rallies and vigils have been held in Bangladesh to mark the anniversary of the Rana Plaza disaster.

The compensation fund established after the disaster is still missing US\$6 million out of the targeted US\$30 million needed to compensate the victims.

Those still to pay up in full include international brands such as Mango, Walmart and Benneton.

As for safety, unions say that while important progress has been made, the fact is that all remediation is currently behind schedule, some by over six months.

The unions say they will use every tool within the legal binding Bangladesh Accord to ensure that the brands and factory owners fix the factories.

UNI Global Union General Secretary Philip Jennings says:

“It's outrageous that families who lost their mothers and breadwinners have still not been fully compensated because a group of multinationals cannot find it in their hearts or deep pockets to pay the US\$6 million missing from the compensation fund. All brands need to join forces to end the funding crisis by closing the funding gap and stepping up the remedial work on factories.”



Download our CWU phone app



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