

# S.The Signal

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**BALLOT OPENS 9 SEPTEMBER  
CLOSES 10AM 2 OCTOBER**

**AUSTRALIA POST TECHNICAL  
MEMBERS MEETING**

SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER  
CEPU Office:  
47 HENDERSON ROAD,  
CLAYTON

The meeting will discuss the various forms of industrial strike action which may be applied by Postal Techs.

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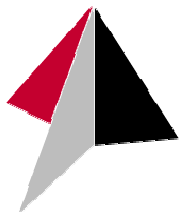
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## THE EBA TALKS WITH TELSTRA

The negotiations with Telstra have gone as well as one could expect given the history, the complexity and number of issues, and given the situation existing within Telstra (e.g. AWAs, ITEAs, ECAs, two separate banding systems, etc).

On most of the issues there seems to be agreement or a pathway to agreement, which when taken altogether could deliver a reasonable EBA.

However, there are two major issues that are so far proving difficult to resolve.

**One is the issue of whether members will have the right to access arbitration to seek fair treatment and have disputes settled, should the situation require it.**

The other is whether all new employees to Telstra in the future are tied to Telstra's non-negotiated banding and classification system, (along with its performance pay regime with pay increases and base rates set by Management, etc), thus making the EBA type system (negotiated annual pay increases and negotiated banding and classification rates of pay etc), a legacy system to be phased out eventually.

**The question of pay has yet to be discussed in any substantial way.**

More talks are programmed and the unions are putting more proposals to try to solve the two major issues.

Telstra has placed proposals before the unions on these issues previously, but they are not yet considered acceptable to the unions.

**Members are getting concerned about the delays and whether agreement will be reached. The next couple of weeks will tell us whether we are out of the woods or not. Hopefully, agreement can be reached on the remaining issues to secure an acceptable agreement.**

Members will be kept informed.

## TELSTRA PROFIT JUMPS 10%, OPTUS 13%

Telstra revealed a healthy 10% rise in net profits when it announced its annual results on 13 August.

Telstra's annual result shows the resilience of the telecommunications sector – or at least its major players – during difficult economic times. Optus also returned a strong first quarter result, with profits up 13%.

Now it's time for Telstra and Optus employees to receive their share of those gains.

In the case of both companies, strong ongoing growth in the mobiles sector underpinned earnings growth. Telstra also continued to see strong growth in fixed broadband (15.9%), although at a lower rate than last year.

Gains in these areas offset the decline in traditional voice products, which in Telstra's case fell by 4.9%.

**With less staff Telstra and Optus employees are working harder than ever. Telstra total staff numbers fell by 2881 over the year and its labour costs fell by 0.6%. Optus also cut staff –though only by 260 – and reduced labour costs by 5.4%.**

Telecommunications workers cannot accept a situation where profit growth is being achieved at the expense of jobs and decent wage rises for all employees in the sector.

This is the message that the CEPU have been taking to both Telstra and Optus management during the EA negotiations in both companies.

## BROADCAST AUSTRALIA ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

On 21 August 2009 CEPU Officials met with Broadcast Australia to discuss outstanding issues relating to the Draft Enterprise Agreement proposed by Broadcast Australia management.

The issues under discussion included:

- Salary Increase
- Work Related Travel
- Higher Duties Allowance
- Call Outs/On Call Provisions, including:
  - Paying higher on call rates for all public holidays.
  - Increase the daily rate for on call standard rate.
  - Consider a minimum payment for those called out but not on call.
- Staffing Levels
- 10 Hour Break
- Public Holiday's on Rostered Days Off
- Reconciliation of Shift/Overtime After 8 Week Cycle
- Toil
- Provision of Vehicles (WA only)
  - Although a number proposals were canvassed we were not able to get a firm response to some of the issues, however, Broadcast Australia have agreed to consider a number of proposals put by the union and provide a response early in September.

Members should also be aware that our Western Australian Branch in conjunction with their members have again set up a web based forum to discuss the agreement and management attitude to the various issues raised. The address for the forum is <http://www.broadcast.cepuforum.com/news.php>

For further information please contact the Branch office.

### **TELSTRA LINKS STAFF BONUSES TO CUSTOMER SERVICE**

In a move designed to flag a greater focus on customer service, Telstra CEO David Thodey has announced new steps to align staff rewards with service targets.

**According to Mr Thodey, Telstra has set itself the objective of “acknowledging” all customer complaints within 24 hours and providing a positive response to them within five days. Staff performance targets and related bonuses will be linked to this goal.**

The CEPU supports Telstra's attempts to improve customer service levels. However, it does not support measures that shift the responsibility for poor management decisions onto employees. Understaffing, the root cause of many of Telstra's problems, is not something that employees control or that they should be expected to be able to compensate for. Performance targets need to be realistic, given the resourcing levels that have been determined by management.

**The CEPU has raised these issues with Telstra in the context of the EA discussions and is waiting for clarification about the details of the new scheme. The union believes, however, that there needs to be transparency and fairness in any performance-based component of total pay and these principles should apply whether the payments fall within our outside the EA framework.**

### **CEPU MEMBERS WIN ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION PAYOUT**

**Union representatives on the board of the Telstra superannuation fund, Telstra Super, have helped ensure a fair outcome for CEPU members in relation to workers' compensation payments.**

The issue arose because the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1998 uses superannuation entitlements as the basis of calculating workers' compensation levels for employees who have been invalidated out of work and have received either a lump sum or a pension from a super scheme as a result.

In these cases, the employer has to advise the workers' comp insurer of the “superannuation amount” i.e. the employer contribution to the scheme and this forms the basis of the compensation benefit. Failure to do so may result in the insurer making the wrong calculations about total compensation benefits with the result that employees can end up out of pocket.

**This problem arose in relation to two CEPU members who were not paid full workers' compensation entitlements because Telstra had not provided the correct information to the insurer, Allianz. The matter was pursued through CEPU representatives on the Telstra Super board and has now been resolved.**

Any CEPU members who are in a similar position (i.e. facing being invalidated out of Telstra) or who know of an employee in this situation should contact their state branch for advice.

### **OPTUS EA NEGOTIATIONS**

The CEPU has now met twice with Optus to discuss the content of the new Optus Enterprise Agreement.

CEPU consultations with Optus members have identified a number of issues which employees want to see clarified in negotiations:

- Basis for establishing minimum pay rates
- Greater transparency in relation to the performance-based component of total pay.
- Method by which Annual Leave Loading is incorporated into pay.
- Determining what is “reasonable evidence” of illness for sick leave purposes.
- Clarification of parental leave entitlements in light of proposed Government scheme i.e. the current Optus 12 week entitlement should be in addition to any Government-funded leave.

- Extension of overtime and call out entitlements to REM 14.

The CEPU has represented these issues to Optus management.

Under Labor's new good faith bargaining rules, the company is obliged to respond to the union concerns and proposals and give reasons for their responses.

The CEPU will be providing members with more details of the outcomes of the negotiations when they have been progressed further.

## NEW ZEALAND STRIKE ACTION WIDENS

Telecommunications field staff have widened their industrial campaign against plans to turn them into sub-contractors.

Workers in North Shore, Auckland, downed tools earlier this month in protest against the moves by Australian-based contractor, Visionstream, to change their employment arrangements. The moves follow Visionstream's winning Telecom New Zealand service contracts from Downer EDI and Transfield who have until now employed the staff on a permanent basis.

The action by the Auckland employees was followed up by a two day strike by some 900 other affected staff in other parts of New Zealand.

Engineering Union (EPMU) national industry organiser Joe Gallagher said "This strike action is

a direct result of Telecom's contracting model, which plays contractors off against each other in a race to the bottom on wages and the stability of the network."

"Independent analysis shows that under this model lines engineers would see a 50-65% drop in income, would have no guarantee of regular work and would have to shoulder huge business risks for little return."

"Meanwhile members at Downer EDI are being forced to choose between giving up wages and working for piece rates or taking on the same dependent contractor sham that Visionstream is trying to force."

**EPMU members are now continuing their campaign through "broadband bans" Under the ban, Telecom-contracted lines engineers in Auckland, Northland and Blenheim are refusing to connect new broadband customers, service broadband connections or work on Telecom New Zealand's fibre-to-the-cabinet project.**

### Solidarity actions

The global union for the telecommunications sector, Union Network International (UNI) has called on both Telecom New Zealand and Visionstream to behave as responsible employers and recognise employees' legitimate demands for secure forms of employment.

You can help the New Zealand telecom workers by sending that

same message to TCNZ CEO Paul Reynolds. Go to the story on the CEPU website at <http://www.cepconnects.org/telecommunications/news-and-circulars/kiwi-telco-workers-need-your-support/index.cfm>

## TELSTRA IN COURT FOR SAFETY BREACHES

This week Comcare initiated proceedings in the Federal Court against Telstra alleging a breach of s17 of the OH&S Act. The proceedings arise from an incident in which a member of the public was injured when an access pit was allegedly left unguarded. In January this year two Telstra sub-contractors opened an access pit while conducting work. The pit is located on a pathway between a Brisbane railway station and an organisation that provides services to persons with impaired vision.

While the access pit was allegedly left open and unguarded a vision impaired person fell into the pit and sustained a serious personal injury. This case follows an earlier similar case which related to a woman carrying a baby who sustained an injury. Whilst not seeking to pre-empt the outcomes from either of these cases, the CEPU has warned Telstra at the EA talks of our concerns with performance targets getting in the way of OH&S matters.

**LEN COOPER**  
**Branch Secretary**

## TELSTRA TRAVEL ALLOWANCE RATES EFFECTIVE 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2009

Telstra has announced the outcome of its Travel Allowance review and the following rates are effective 1/07/2009.

Location	Accommodation	Meals			Incidentals \$	Total \$
		Breakfast \$	Lunch \$	Dinner \$		
Adelaide	136.20	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	236.10
Brisbane	132.00	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	231.90
Canberra	113.10	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	213.00
Darwin	133.60	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	233.50
Hobart	106.30	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	206.20
Melbourne	153.20	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	253.10
Perth	125.80	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	225.70
Sydney	167.00	20.70	23.30	40.00	15.90	266.90
Country Centre	87.50	18.50	20.50	37.90	15.90	180.30
Camping Rate	83.10	16.80	18.70	31.60	14.40	164.60
Night Rate of Frequent Absence Allowance						\$21.40

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