

# S.The Signal

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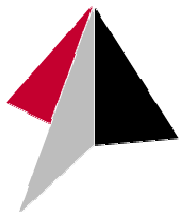
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## VALE BARBARA NELSON ATKIN

Barbara was an active CEPU member and elected Committee of Management member. She died recently after a fight against serious illness. The Executive of the Victorian T&S Branch of the CEPU published the following tribute to Barbara in the daily press:

Fond memories of a dedicated union and community activist.

Barb has left an ongoing legacy of fighting for fairness and decency in her workplace, at great personal cost, for many years.

Your commitment to the cause won't be forgotten.

Branch Executive

## TELSTRA EA NEGOTIATIONS: PROGRESS GRINDS DOWN

The CEPU has expressed its concern that progress in negotiating a new Enterprise Agreement in Telstra is stalling and has been undertaking a membership-wide discussion about next steps.

In a resolution adopted on 16<sup>th</sup> October, the Communications Division Executive noted that agreement had still not been reached in three key areas:

- **The structure of the agreement.** Telstra wants to be able to put new employees on different pay arrangements from those that currently apply to EA staff. Those arrangements are based on classification structures that have not been negotiated.
- **The provisions of the dispute resolution process.** Telstra has still not agreed to allow employees to utilise the full extent of Fair Work Australia's arbitration powers

to resolve fair treatment disputes between employees and Telstra.

- **The size of the wage rise,** including the payment of backpay.

In view of what the CEPU fears may be stalemate in these areas, the Executive determined that members should be consulted about how their claims might now be progressed, including the possibility of renewing the union's industrial action campaign.

## TELSTRA UNION DEBATES INDUSTRIAL ACTION – MEDIA COVERAGE

ZDNET 19 October 2009

**Telstra's main union has raised the spectre of further industrial action in response to its concern that progress in negotiating a new enterprise agreement with the telco.**

In a newsletter distributed to union members, the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU) said it had taken a resolution that state branches would begin contacting members to get their views on the way forward, "including the possibility of renewing the union's industrial action campaign".

At issue are three areas that Telstra and the union have not been able to reach agreement on. The first is the size of the potential wage rise, including back pay. Telstra has offered around 10,000 unionised staff a 9 per cent rise over three years. But union representatives want a 15 per cent rise.

Secondly, the union has claimed Telstra wants to put employees on different pay arrangements than those that currently apply to staff under an enterprise agreement. "Those arrangements would be based on classification structures

**CEPU's EBA IN TELSTRA MEETINGS for members and other staff**  
**NORTH: 7PM THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2009: PRESTON MASONIC HALL 382 Bell Street**

that have not been negotiated with the union," the CEPU's newsletter states.

In addition, the issue of whether employees would be able to use the full powers of the national workplace relations tribunal Fair Work Australia has not been decided. Telstra has not yet responded to a request for comment on the issue.

In the newsletter, the CEPU also gave an update on the status of other negotiations; it is currently in talks with local groups Silcar Telepower, Broadcast Australia and Kordia.

### **SILCAR TELEPOWER AGREEMENT**

Silcar Telepower employees and the union met in conference in Sydney on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in an attempt to resolve issues around their proposed new Enterprise Agreement. To date, employees have twice rejected the proposed EA.

The conference was attended by 10 employee representatives, three CEPU officials and by Silcar management. Key issues included the term of the agreement, the size of any pay rise, the trades grade restructure, recalls and stand-down provisions.

Informal understandings have been reached on some, if not all, of these issues and Silcar has now undertaken to respond formally to the proposals put to it in the meeting. For their part, the CEPU and other employee representatives will be reporting back to the rest of the staff before the next round of discussions.

### **BROADCAST AUSTRALIA EA TALKS CONTINUE**

Further negotiations between the CEPU and Broadcast Australia were held on 9<sup>th</sup> October. Matters discussed included work-related travel, higher duties allowance,

salary increase, call-outs, stand down during 10 hour breaks, reconciliation of shift/overtime hours after 8 weeks and additional vehicles for WA.

The CEPU is now waiting on a response to a number of these issues. A Bulletin will be sent to all Broadcast Australia members as soon as that response is received.

### **KORDIA ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT**

Negotiations with Kordia for an Enterprise Agreement covering Maritime Safety Communications Officers is now a step closer to being finalised following a 2 year deal that will provide for a salary increase and the introduction of new allowances.

Recent negotiations held in Canberra have resulted in a draft agreement that meets most members' claims being provided to the CEPU. Subject to the finalisation a few amendments, the draft agreement should be provided to staff next week.

### **WORK SAFETY/INJURIES: EMPLOYEES PAY THE LION'S SHARE**

In Australia each year around half a million accidents occur. The word accident has a connotation of mishap but the reality of this figure is that the vast majority could have been prevented.

Each year we lose around 8,000 workers as a result of a work related death: 450 from traumatic incidents and the remaining 7,500 from illness or disease. The highest number is cancers relating to asbestos use but there are others from exposure to hazardous chemicals and substances.

**These deaths are 4 times higher than the road toll and without wishing to denigrate the trauma**

**of February's bushfires the death rate from work-related disease and injury is 40 times higher. We should quite rightly ask why there has been no royal Commission into workplace deaths and injuries.**

But it is workers and the community who pay the biggest price and suffer the biggest hardship from these workplace injuries, not the bosses.

Take the figures from 2005-06. In that year Workers Compensation costs were \$57.7 Billion i.e. 5.9% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Of these figures 3% of the costs were borne by employers, 49% by the workers themselves and 48% by the community i.e. by Centrelink payments and other costs.

Even if the costs of Workers Compensation premiums are added then the employers share still only rises to 18%. Despite all their crying of crocodile tears the employers are getting off lightly.

### **WORKPLACE STRESS: FRENCH TELCO WORKERS STRIKE**

**Telecommunications workers in France have taken industrial action against management practices at France Telecom which some say have contributed to a series of suicides among staff.**

Unions estimate that around 40% of the firm's 100,000 workers took part in the work stoppage, and several hundred staged peaceful rallies in Paris and some provincial towns.

**Twenty Four France Telecom employees have taken their own lives since the beginning of 2008, the majority of them leaving notes referring to pressures at work.**

The company has undergone massive changes since privatisation in the late 1990s,

including tens of thousands of job losses and even some France Telecom executives have expressed the view that this has contributed to stress amongst staff.

**Earlier this month, company officials were summoned by the French Government, which retains a 27% stake in the company, to provide a “please explain”.**

The company has now replaced the manager of its French operations and the company chairman and chief executive Didier Lombard has promised to negotiate a "new social contract" with staff.

France Telecom has set up a telephone counselling service and has put on hold further management reforms.

Australia's telecommunications workers have experienced similar pressures in recent years, with a number of suicides by Telstra employees having been attributed to workplace stress. It is worth noting, however, that under Australia's workplace laws, strike action such as that taken in France remains illegal.

### **TELSTRA'S DODGY OFFSHORE PARTNER GUILTY OF POOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

**WIPRO Technologies is an India-based company being used by Telstra to do the work of Telstra employees in Next Generation Operations (NGO). The company employs an all-Indian workforce and they are employed to work alongside Telstra workers. They are in Australia on Section 457 visas which are special “short-term” visas designed to supplement the existing workforce when there is a skills shortage – not to replace long-term permanent positions.**

As if it's not bad enough that Telstra has entered into a deal which will see yet more employees made redundant, the situation is made even worse by Telstra's dealings with Wipro<sup>1</sup> which, among other things, has been barred by the World Bank for providing improper financial benefits to World Bank staff<sup>2</sup>.

**At a recent meeting called by the CEPU, Telstra management denied that the contracting out and redundancies in the NGO (Next Generation Operations) area were linked to the recent industrial action over stalled EBA negotiations.**

1. (This is the subject of discussions between the CEPU and Telstra)

2 "The Hindu: [www.hinduonnet.com/2009/01/13/stories](http://www.hinduonnet.com/2009/01/13/stories) "

When a company gets up to these sorts of tricks with a prestigious organisation like the World Bank, you can only wonder what they are doing elsewhere – and what they will do in their relationship with Telstra.

**Of course it also raises the question of how many other jobs are scheduled to go offshore 3 to this dodgy outfit and the impact it is likely to have on the local jobs market. Every Telstra job is potentially threatened by such behaviour.**

3. National Institute of Economic and Industry Research Report (27 May 2008)

Make no mistake about it: Wipro is all about exporting Australian jobs to India, and they are enthusiastically assisted by companies (like Telstra) wishing to slash their wage bill by employing cheap Indian labour and dumping their existing workforce on the scrap heap – and all in the name of increasing profit margins, with no regard for the social consequences.

Wipro has also been less than co-operative with Indian police who are investigating the recent death of a Wipro employee in

Bangalore.<sup>4</sup> An HR executive has been quoted as saying: “We have been directed not to reveal any information ...” about the employee. Local police said: “We are not ruling out murder. There are a lot of unanswered questions and it is for Wipro to clear the doubts”.

4 "Siliconindia News Bureau 27 August 2009: [www.siliconindia.com](http://www.siliconindia.com) "

**So, it appears that Telstra is getting cosy with a company which pays little regard to proper business rules, and which goes out of its way to frustrate police in the course of investigating a possible murder. Strange bedfellows, indeed!**

But let's not forget the real issue here: The offshoring of Australian jobs must be stopped immediately. A recent report by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research suggests that around 1,000 jobs every week could go offshore over the next 20 years.

That's over a million Australians denied the opportunity of a high-tech, well-paid job, so how can that be in the best interests of the country and its workforce?

**It's time for Australian corporations, like Telstra, to recognise that they have an obligation not just to their shareholders, but also to the community in which their profits are generated in the first place. And it's not unreasonable for the community to expect that the Australian Government takes appropriate measures to ensure that these service sector jobs remain in the country, thereby ensuring that Australia, and Australian workers, retain the skills necessary to compete in this increasingly complex and technological world.**

Not to do so, would leave the country vulnerable in many areas, and completely at the mercy of

the dodgy characters of the  
corporate world. Is that a good  
thing for this country?

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