

S.The Signal

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■ **Contact a CEPU Official:**

LEN COOPER
Branch Secretary
0438 389 302

JOHN ELLERY
Assist Secretary
0419 823 580

WOODY
First In Call Taker
Ph. 9349 4411

SUE RILEY
CSO Call Centres
0439 762 455

COMMUNICATIONS UNION (CEPU)

Main Office

1/139 Queensberry Street
Carlton South 3053

Ph: 03 9349 4411

Fax : 03 9349 3488

Email

cdtsvic@victs.cepu.asn.au

Clayton Office

47 Henderson Rd
Clayton 3168

Ph: 03 9545 1503

Fax: 03 9561 5599



TELSTRA INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATE

Members will recall that just prior to Christmas, Telstra tried to stop the various industrial actions notified by the CEPU – despite claiming at the same time that the EA employees' union campaign was having little or no impact on its business! Those attempts failed and stoppages and overtime/recall bans have been ongoing despite the Xmas lull.

We are aware of a widespread take up of the stoppage action around the 3 days between Christmas and New Year, where members decided to have a longer break. We are also aware of the widespread use of the log-on half hour action before starting time across Telstra where members are refusing that half hour unpaid overtime.

There have been other examples of effective action such as in Palm Cove, North Queensland where the press is reporting customer complaints regarding faults with their phones, internet and EFTPOS connections for days at a time.

In NSW the Argent network had a major outage with around 25% of national leased line EFTPOS services down.

In WA the CEPU suspended some action because of our life and limb policy relating to the bushfires. We are concerned with reports of local management abuse of our goodwill in this regard. There have been other actions across all States and Territories of Australia.

In terms of the EA, members received the 2% from October and a 2.5% sign on bonus (even though we never signed up).

Members have advised the bonus timing was helpful in the lead up to Christmas. All your existing EA conditions remain, i.e. redundancy, penalty rates, long service

leave, etc arising from and including agreements reached with the Federal Government.

MEMBERS EBA CONFERENCE - GREAT EFFORT

The CEPU members' conference about the EBA campaign in Telstra, held Saturday 30 January 2010, was an important event in establishing the next stage of our EBA campaign in Telstra.

Over 100 representatives of members in Victoria took part either directly or via telephone conference.

The conference overwhelmingly decided to continue the EBA campaign and step up the action on all fronts. Members are still angry that Telstra would discriminate against them relative to those on ECAs, to the tune of anything from \$10,000 to \$20,000 less over the life of the agreement, not to mention losses in superannuation, allowances, overtime etc.

The conference was addressed by Divisional officials Ed Husic and Burt Blackburne, Branch Secretary Len Cooper and P&T Branch Organiser Val Butler.

The representatives came from a wide range of areas both operationally and geographically and they decided to step the strike and other industrial action, now that most members have returned from their holidays. They also decided to combine the industrial action with a public and political campaign to expose management's double standards on a range of issues including management remuneration, customer service standards, employee mistreatment, corporate governance, waste of shareholder funds/shareholder value etc.

A special web site "Telstragreed.com.au" will be established as an aid to the campaign.

Considerable discussion also took place about Telstra's decade and a half long project to de-unionise the company, and the similarity between that project and the union busting techniques that come out of the United States of America and union busting companies from that country.

The delegates at the conference made a number of good suggestions about additional effective industrial action and public action which will be of great value to the EBA campaign.

PLEASE NOTE: Go to the web site www.cepu.net.au to access the papers distributed to the conference.

TELSTRA SICK LEAVE: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

CEPU members are reporting an increased number of requests from Telstra management to provide proof that they have been sick when they have taken leave. In some cases, the requests have been made weeks after the leave was actually taken.

Members should be clear about their rights in this area. These are governed by the Telstra General Conditions of Employment Award (Clause 25.4).

The Award allows you a total of up to five days paid sick leave without your having to provide a medical certificate.

However, you must provide evidence of illness/injury if:

- you take more than three days sick leave in a row or
- you are asked to produce evidence that you were sick/injured *within one day of your return to work.*

So you cannot be required to produce evidence for short periods of sick leave (i.e. fewer than four days) *unless* the request is made

the day you come back. If you are asked to produce evidence in these circumstances, it can be in the form of a statutory declaration.

M2 COMMANDER COMMUNICATIONS

The CEPU has been involved in negotiations with M2 Commander regarding the relocation to Adelaide of Technical Support and Provisioning Team functions currently performed out of North Sydney.

A number of members have contacted the CEPU regarding their rights and entitlements in this situation.

Some employees will be moving into other roles for M2 Commander at the Sydney centre but others will be made redundant. It is anticipated that the relocation arrangements will be finalised by late February.

Members should seek advice from their state branch in the first instance.

POSTAL EBA7 – SECURITY, SAFETY, PAY Action Report out now

By now members will have received in the mail the Postal EBA7 Action Report. This gives a snapshot of the industrial campaign that was conducted in Post in December.

Once again we thank members for your patience and discipline - along with the hard work and initiative of local union representatives and activists.

Where to from here

- Initial discussions held with Post in mid January to help progress the development of a new fair EBA offer that would be acceptable to members. Talks set to continue in February.

- February 1 the new Managing Director begins at Australia Post.
- Membership briefings to be held from mid-February.

TELSTRA EXCHANGE “MAKEOVER DAY”

Members would be aware of Telstra's Exchange “Makeover Day” project which commenced on 5 December last year.

On that clean up day employees were invited to bring along their own paint brushes, lawn mowers and hedge trimmers to clean up more than 200 sites in the largest cities.

Originally, Telstra sought to have employees take up this activity in their own time but subsequently agreed to pay overtime in some circumstances. For senior staff, however, it was a “love” job.

Subsequently information came out that showed that the Telstra Network Facilities budget had been slashed, with a 20% cut to Network Integrity Works and a 50% cut to Operational Integrity.

In turn Exchange Maintenance including some of the activities undertaken on “Maintenance Day” was obliterated.

Initially a You Tube video appeared on the internet explaining the maintenance cuts but it then suddenly disappeared. Should you want to see the video or get a list of the maintenance cuts contact the Branch office.



Footscray exchange litter



Syringes litter Footscray exchange: maintenance cuts mean sub-standard conditions and public health risks

The above photos give the idea of the state of some of the exchanges. If you have any similar photos please forward them to the Branch office.

SERVICE BLITZ UPDATE

Members advise that Communications Technicians (CTs) can still receive Blitz points even though they have been taken “off the box” to undertake other duties.

For a period, CTs were disadvantaged while performing other duties. Techs can now receive 3.9 points!

Get into the Blitz site, go to “Create”, insert the date then “Other”, add the 3.9 “Off the Box” and the particular task you have been performing.

Hopefully this will alleviate problems experienced by CTs when they were not receiving points whilst undertaking alternative duties.

The CEPU has not been a fan of Service Blitz but this might help

NBN CO CONSULTS ON NETWORK DESIGN

NBN Co has begun a national consultation with the telecommunications industry about the design of its proposed network.

In late December the company issued a Consultation Paper outlining the key features of the network. According to the blueprint, NBN Co will operate only at a

very basic level (Layer 2) of the Next Generation Network “stack”. It will provide physical access and connectivity for broadband services but all other functions- at both wholesale and retail levels - will have to be provided by the other companies which use the network.

Concerns are being raised in the industry as to how many companies in Australia will have the resources to build national networks on top of this minimal base and consequently the extent to which this model will actually stimulate competition in the wireline space.

The other major design issue canvassed by NBN Co is the number of points at which its Telco customers will be able to access the network. No number has been fixed yet, but statements by NBN Co Mike Quigley suggest it might be between 100 and 200.

This implies a sweeping rationalisation of the current national wireline network. Its extent can be gauged by the fact that there are currently over 5,000 Telstra Exchange Service Areas (ESAs), 602 of which are located in the denser urban and suburban areas.

The industry is still digesting the full implications of this model. One thing is clear, however: with only some 200 points at which other carriers can interconnect, NBN Co will have to offer not only “last mile” access services but considerable backhaul as well, particularly in rural and regional areas.

This in turn raises the prospect of NBN Co acquiring, in some form, Telstra backhaul assets i.e. a significant portion of the existing Interexchange Network (IEN).

The extent that NBN Co will have to acquire such capacity from Telstra is just one of many NBN issues which remain outstanding,

including the overarching question of pricing. Indeed with the fundamentals of network design yet to be finalised, it will clearly be some time before the mainland roll-out gets fully underway.

NEW WORKPLACE RIGHTS BECOME LAW

On 1 January, new workplace rights came into force. Together with modern awards, these rights will underpin the conditions of the great majority of working Australians.

The National Employment Standards (NES) establish minimum standards for working hours, for paid and unpaid leave and for redundancy entitlements. They are a key part of the Federal Labor Government’s workplace reform programme which has also involved the reintroduction of unfair dismissal protections and the abolition of Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs).

The NES also guarantee employees the right to ask for flexible working arrangements so they can care for young children, a request that can only be refused on reasonable business grounds.

Most CEPU telecoms members of course enjoy conditions that are above the minimum set by the NES, especially in relation to working hours and redundancy entitlements. However, the introduction of the NES puts a floor under the conditions of the whole workforce and so helps prevent the race to the bottom that was encouraged by the Howard Government through the introduction of AWAs.

LEN COOPER Branch Secretary