

S.The Signal

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THE TELSTRA "SNOOPS"

The CEPU believes it has caught at least 5 Telstra managers who have engaged in the spying/monitoring of CEPU member telephone hook-ups organised to discuss the EBA campaign in Telstra.

The CEPU as a result has taken the following action:

- * It notified Fair Work Australia (FWA) of what CEPU believes is a clear breach of "good faith bargaining".
- * It notified the Australian Federal Police of what CEPU believes is a clear breach of the Telecommunications Interception Act, which if proven is a criminal offence.

As the time for the FWA hearing approached, in FWA, Telstra made a very limited "weasel word" posting/distribution of the following statement, on or about the day of the FWA hearing. It read:

"You may have seen reports where claims have been made that a small number of Telstra employees joined conference calls held by a union. Telstra is taking the claims seriously and we have commenced an internal inquiry into the matter.

Regardless of the outcome of the inquiry, it is important to understand that you must not join calls uninvited or without announcing yourself. We will provide a detailed explanation to our people managers over the coming days, setting out expectations and obligations for all employees."

Despite the CEPU directly notifying Telstra Corporate of the alleged breaches of law, Telstra

took no other action up to that stage.

As a result of the FWA hearing, Telstra agreed to post/distribute the following "beefed up" statement:

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT CONFERENCE CALLS

"You may have seen reports where claims have been made that number of Telstra managers joined conference calls organised by the CEPU, Telstra is taking the claims seriously and we have commenced an internal inquiry into the matter.

Regardless of the outcome of the inquiry, this is a serious matter and it is important to remind all managers and employees about their obligations. Managers and employees must not join conference calls (including union conference calls) unless they have been invited by the moderator (including the relevant union) to join the call.

Telstra recognises freedom of association, including the right to participate and be represented in bargaining.

All managers and employees are expected to comply with these obligations."

In the first statement Telstra wanted to "play down" the issue by referring to a "small number of employees....." Typical Telstra spin and cover up.

The fact is that our evidence seems to demonstrate that it was not simply "employees" but managers, and not just team leader level managers who are involved in snooping. Telstra has set up an internal inquiry, (Telstra investigating itself), and the CEPU has written to Telstra seeking more detailed information about the

“inquiry” – e.g. terms of reference, who the inquirer might be, who can make submissions, and what might happen to the results of the inquiry.

We know don't we, that if such alleged illegal actions were taken by ordinary “employees”, Telstra management would be ruthless, wouldn't they?

Let's see if Telstra considers that everyone is equal before the law and equal before Telstra policy and values, shall we?

CONTINUING ADVERSE ACTION

CEPU currently has an "Adverse Action" claim in the Federal Magistrates Court against Telstra seeking compensation, penalties, and other orders for an alleged breach of the Fair Work Act. We are now finalising our statement of claim.

We have identified four areas of claim. They are:

1. cancellation of ETCA and payment of proven costs
2. return of motor vehicles (excluding Take Home vehicles)
3. return of motor vehicles - Take Home vehicles
4. threats of disciplinary action

We have been advised that since this claim was filed, Telstra has fixed the ETCA issue and paid in full.

Telstra said that they did not implement return of vehicles - but we understand that this is not correct.

Would any member who has a Take Home Vehicle and who returned it to the depot during the industrial action please advise: your name, your depot and dates returned, and any cost involved in the return. Please advise even if there are no costs claimed.

Would any member who was away from home with a vehicle

(in rural and remote areas) and who returned it to the depot during the industrial action please advise: your name, your depot and dates returned, and any cost involved in the return.

We are also seeking orders that all disciplinary action be reversed.

Please Email any information to Ken at kjhardisty@gmail.com as soon as possible.

TELSTRA CUTS CUSTOMER SERVICE AGAIN

[CEPU media release 29 July 2010]
Telstra is continuing with its plans to “lay-off” as redundant, the 900 operational employees announced several weeks ago. These redundancies are separate from the recently announced intention to make over 300 senior and middle level managers redundant.

The laying off of the 900 hundred direct customer facing and other customer serving employees is a further attack on the customer service standards in Telstra, contrary to the undertakings of the CEO David Thodey.

For example, many “blue chip” companies will experience longer delays in service restoration and other aspects of their communications systems service as a result of making critical, highly skilled technical staff redundant, in Telstra's data centres in Sydney and Melbourne.

As a further example, as a result of the highly skilled technical staff in Telstra's Clayton Victoria, Global Operations Centre (GOC) being made redundant, Telstra has deliberately downgraded some of the “alert systems” at the GOC so that customer service failures and difficulties will only be addressed “in hours” and therefore customer service failures will not be cor-

rected until the next day or until after the weekend.

More Telstra personnel in regional areas are being made redundant, reducing Telstra's capacity to respond to service failures and provision of new services and further reducing spending/buying power in the country areas.

Figures from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman for 2009 showed an overall 130% increase in complaint-handling issues and a 72% increase in complaints about customer service in telecommunications companies including Telstra. And while the TIO subsequently reported a small drop in the complaints numbers for the first three months of 2010, the total number of complaints still exceeded 50,000 in the quarter.

Telstra has made an “in principle” agreement with NBN Co. and the Federal Government, to rollout a national fibre-to-the-home project, the biggest project since the Snowy River Scheme. The ink is not dry on the agreement and Telstra is shedding the very skilled labour that will be vital to the project and many of these skilled, trained workers will be lost to the industry.

“This is a management that is devoid of any ideas of how to solve the company's current and future problems, other than relying on the “blunt weapon” of mass redundancies every year,” Says Len Cooper Victorian Branch Secretary of the CEPU. “The outcomes of these redundancies will further erode customer service in a company with an appalling record, and this is completely contrary to the CEO's commitments to the public, the shareholders and the regulators,” says Len Cooper.

“The redundancies of critical customer serving staff must stop,” says Len Cooper.

EMPLOYEE BONUSES AT TELSTRA

Some 30,000 Telstra employees will receive a \$1000 bonus in August after the company met its short-term service targets for 2009-2010.

The incentive scheme was announced by Telstra CEO David Thodey last year as part of an attempt to address declining customer service standards. Thodey said then that the company had set itself the goal of responding in some form to any and all customer contacts within 24 hours.

It is not clear whether this specific target has been met, but the CEPU welcomes the company's recognition of the contribution its employees are making to improving customer service.

But the union also believes that there is a limit to the extent Telstra employees can be expected to do more with less. Incentive schemes are no substitute for adequate staffing levels, appropriate training and a supportive management culture. These are the issues the company must address if it is to succeed in the new environment that will be created by structural separation.

AFP RESPONDS TO CEPU ON ALLEGED TELECOMMUNICATIONS BREACHES

The Perth Operations Committee of the Federal Police (AFP) has responded in writing to the CEPU regarding the union's claims of alleged unauthorised access to CEPU member-only telephone hook-ups by Telstra managers.

The AFP has determined that the matter be accepted for investigation of possible Commonwealth offences.

The decision comes on the heels of representations to Telstra by the CEPU regarding Telstra's own internal inquiry into this matter. The CEPU has sought details of how the internal inquiry will be conducted and by whom.

Will, for instance, CEPU evidence be made available to the internal investigation and will the CEPU be advised of the outcome of the inquiry?

Members will be kept advised of developments on both fronts.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS IN EXCHANGES

The CEPU has made representations to Telstra regarding the removal of fire extinguishers from Telstra exchanges and other centres.

The CEPU raised the issue because our members are regularly required to visit such workplaces in order to carry out various maintenance work including tasks which involve the use of gas powered/soldering irons with a naked flame.

Telstra describes this work as “hot work” and has indicated that contractors and employees undertaking such work must have a 9 litre water type extinguisher and a 3.5 kg CO2 extinguisher at the work site.

Members should ensure that they are provided with such equipment and carry it with them before undertaking “hot works” in those centres where the building inventory does not include installed fire extinguishers.

TELSTRA SHAKE-UP WILL CONTINUE, SAYS THODEY

Telstra CEO David Thodey has foreshadowed further major changes in Telstra in the wake of internal reorganisations and cuts to management numbers.

On 21 July, reductions of 10% to both Telstra's top echelons and to middle management were announced. Some 300 management positions will go, including 30 at senior executive level. Telstra said the cuts were designed to eliminate duplication and speed decision making in the company.

Six days later came a major restructure to the operations area, designed to integrate the company's IT capabilities more fully into its network platforms and related product offerings.

According to Telstra Chief Operations Officer, Mick Rocca, the move will allow Telstra to have “one area of responsibility for architecture, planning, design etc regardless of technology and regardless of whether its network or IT”.

The move is a response to the ongoing convergence of telecommunications platforms and IT systems. But it also reflects a change in orientation towards the new commercial model the NBN is expected to usher in – one focussed more on applications than on connectivity.

The implications of this shift for company structure – and for employment within it – will be far-reaching, as Thodey has warned.

LEN COOPER Branch Secretary

- **MORE EBA INFORMATION TO FOLLOW SOON**

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