

105-Years of Union

Representing workers in the Telecommunications & IT Industries

Communications Workers Union [CWU]
Telecommunications & Services Branch (NSW)

28-07-2017 #0153/11/17

~ON the LINE~

1. Telstra design roles: CWU pursues classification issue

The Union is continuing to pursue the issue of the correct Workstream alignment of the Designer roles created in the recent reorganisation in the wideband area within Enterprise Services.

Along with an unexpectedly large number of redundancies, the reorganisation involved what was effectively a widebanding of the designer role along the lines of the Job Family model.

Functions that were previously spread over a number of classifications (e.g. internal and external design) were combined into one role at the CFW6 level. The CWU considers that the role should be a CFW7.

The Union has arranged to seek legal advice as to how to pursue this question most effectively and is consulting with counsel on the matter. Members will be kept informed of progress.

2. Optus Single Service Desk

The CWU remains in dispute with Optus over the conditions under which employees are working in the recently created Single Service Desk roles.

This dispute arose last year after Optus members approached the CWU about the fact that they had been put into the new roles without adequate training and without any increase in pay, despite an increase in work functions.

Optus has since agreed to address the training problem and has delivered extra

training to the employees, with more to come.

Predictably enough, however, they have not yet agreed to any increase in pay for these members.

The CWU is continuing to meet with Optus on this issue, as directed by the Fair Work Commission.

3. Field Service Delivery: voluntary redundancies a priority

Telstra has notified its intention of proceeding with the redundancies in Field Service Delivery as part of the larger reorganisation in Network Operations (and other areas of the company) flagged in mid-June.

While the Union doesn't want to see any jobs going from Telstra, it recognises that these redundancies arise, at least in part, from the NBN roll-out which is now well advanced, particularly in rural and regional areas.

For this reason much of our consultation with Telstra has focussed on how to mitigate the impact of the redundancies, both through retraining and redeployment and through ensuring that wherever possible redundancy is voluntary.

We have urged Telstra to make full use of this option rather than using a management selection process that can result in Telstra holding on to employees who want to go while shedding those who want to stay.



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At the same time, we have sought further information from Telstra about such matters as the extent of the use of contractors and the changes in volumes of work in the areas where FSD redundancies are planned.

The fact is that the impacts of the NBN on Telstra field staff will vary from one area to another, both now and in the future, depending on the pace and location of the build and whether or not Telstra has NBN contracts in particular areas. Headline numbers of predicted overall declines in work don't necessarily tell the real story at local level.

The Union has been pursuing these issues so that we are better able to engage Telstra on specific redundancies. Discussions at this level are ongoing.

4. FSD redundancies: stay in touch with your union

In this round of redundancies, it is vital that individual members in FSD stay in touch with the Union if they are to get what they want out of the redundancy process.

In recent times, Telstra has typically received more volunteers for redundancy than there have been positions redundant.

Despite this, redundancy has sometimes been denied some who asked for it while others who wanted to stay on the job in Telstra have been shown the door.

Any member in either of these situations should contact the Branch office immediately so that we can make appropriate representations to Telstra.

It should be possible to avoid such outcomes, especially in circumstances where there is only one position to go out of a group of, say, 8 or 16 and there are likely to be several volunteers.

5. Silcar Communications: EA negotiations update

The Union met with Silcar on Thursday 20 July to try to wrap up arrangements for the transfer of employees from the existing Silcar EA to the Visionstream Field Workforce EA.

Negotiations for this transfer have now been going on for over 18 months and details of the offer to employees covered by the current Silcar Communications EA have been finalised.

However the Union's legal advisors have raised a number of issues about the processes involved in moving employees from one EA to the other, should the proposed arrangements be agreed to by a majority of members.

While the Union does not want to delay voting on the proposal that has been finally arrived at in negotiations, we must ensure that members are protected from any unforeseen consequences of these arrangements such as a gap in continuity of service.

The CWU and Silcar are continuing to work through these legal questions with a view to holding a vote on the proposal by the end of August.

6. Optus boosts mobile network investment in the bush

Optus has announced that it will spend \$1 billion over the next 12 months boosting its mobile network coverage.

Optus has said it will use the funds to build 500 new mobile sites across regional and remote parts of Australia, including 114 sites under the Federal Government's Mobile Blackspots Program.



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The programme also includes completion of Optus' 4G upgrade programme and the roll out of further satellite small cell technology to remote areas of Australia.

As analysts have noted, the \$1 billion spend is not over and above the amount already flagged by Optus for its 2017-18 capital investment and includes the costs of spectrum licences already acquired.

The significance of the announcement lies more in the targeting of the investment which represents a challenge to Telstra and an attempt to cement Optus' position as at least the No.2 mobile carrier before TPG's proposed network gets off the ground.

Last but not least, Optus' investment decision may be seen as an invitation to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to hold its nerve on its draft decision not to "declare" mobile roaming i.e. mandate third party access to mobile carrier networks.

Vodafone, the chief supporter of such access has challenged the ACCC draft decision in the courts as it seeks to extend its own coverage through regulation rather than investment. But the ACCC is still expected to reject declaration when it issues its final decision.

7. Membership alert: Silcar Communications Long Service Leave entitlements

Silcar Communications employees should all be making sure that their Long Service Leave entitlements are being paid into the appropriate fund.

During the course of the negotiations for future terms and conditions for Silcar Communications employees, it became apparent that in some cases long service

leave payments were not being made according to the terms of the current Enterprise Agreement ie they were not being paid into a portable fund.

Employees raised this matter with the CWU and the union subsequently made representations to management about the issue. As result, Silcar undertook to conduct a nation-wide audit of payments to see where there were problems.

Silcar has now told the CWU that the audit is complete and that management believes that all cases of incorrect payment of current employees have been identified.

Where this has been the case, accrued payments will be transferred into the fund nominated in the EA.

Affected members should check to ensure that this has occurred.

This still leaves a problem for employees who have left Silcar and now don't have the benefit of portable entitlements. The Union has pursued this issue with Silcar who have undertaken to see how they can address the problem.

Silcar members who know of employees in this situation should contact the Branch office.

8. Big let-down for Scabby the Rat

Scabby the Rat is perhaps best known nationally for his appearances at the picket line outside the Carlton and United Breweries site in Victoria during the 2016 dispute over that company's attempt to use cheap contract labour to undermine the conditions of existing workers.

Now the courts have moved against Scabby, ordering that he be deflated and removed

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from a picket line at Esso's Longford site where unions are opposing a similar move.

Australian Workers Union, the Australian Maintenance Workers Union and the Electrical Trades Union have been using



Scabby and other picket signs to oppose Esso's decision to change contractors in an attempt to reduce wages and conditions.

The new contractor successfully argued in the Federal Court that Scabby was being used to "coerce" employees not to work and to engage in anti-competitive conduct that has caused "substantial loss" to the business.

Before Scabby was "unplugged" protesters held a minute's silence and played the last post as he was deflated. Unions are now reportedly considering other forms of action, including sending a flotilla of "slave boats" down to the Esso site.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that in the USA, scarcely a beacon of labour movement rights, Scabby's cousins have been successfully protected from deflation by freedom of speech laws.

Source: *Workplace Express*, *AFR*.

We welcome your comments and contributions – send us an email and let us know what you think.

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