

105-Years of Union

Representing workers in the Telecommunications & IT Industries

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

18-12-2017 #0154/12/17

~ON the LINE~

1. Life Member Award.

Colin Cooper, this Branch's longest serving Branch Secretary was honoured with a Life Membership this past weekend. Colin was praised for his tireless fight for the rights of the workers. Many of the benefits we have today, which some workers take for granted, were fought for and pushed through by Colin Cooper. Two items spring to mind immediately and that is the RDO and the redundancy agreement in Telecom (Telstra) as it was known in those days. Members are reminded that the RDO is not just time off work but also that you have actually worked to have those hours off duty.



L to R: Ian McCarthy, Colin Cooper, Len Cooper & Peter Collins

The previous redundancy agreement, for those that can remember the RAGE agreement, there was a maximum payout of 48-weeks and today Telstra workers have one of the best agreements at 80-weeks



Back: Ian McCarthy, Colin Cooper, Len Cooper & Peter Collins
Front: John Ellery, Lloyd Harris Alex Jansen

The Union movement as a whole benefitted from Colin's hard work and foresight to fight for these benefits for members. Other Unions closely followed with their own redundancy agreements and flex day arrangements.

This Branch is particularly proud to have had Colin as its leader for over 20-years before he moved to the Divisional Office as the Communications Divisional President. Colin remained president till he retired from full-time Union duties in 2007. The T&S Branch (NSW) wishes Colin all the very best for the future.



2. Driving Telstra Vehicles.

The Union has represented some members involved in vehicle accidents either to their first job or on the way home after work.



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The Union has received correspondence from Telstra about 10-years ago when this issue first came to the notice of the union. The Telstra letter was signed by a high ranking person who admitted that once you had logged on then technically you were at work or in your vehicle which is regarded as your office.

Recently Telstra workers compensation (w/comp) officers refused to acknowledge a members' claim for w/comp as they stated that the person was driving home and therefore not covered for w/comp. This Branch made submissions to Telstra to reverse their decision, but they refused. We sent them a copy of the letter previously mentioned and also information gathered by concerned members.

The Branch seeing the importance of this issue decided to take the matter to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) for adjudication and resolution. After a few months the lawyer representing our member contacted this office to state that Telstra had conceded and agreed to pay all the medical costs for our member.

It is a pity that the Union has to go through this process to maintain what is essentially a time honoured agreement between Telstra and this Union. Members are advised to be vigilant and to contact the branch office immediately Telstra refuses to pay w/comp for any accident they have in a Telstra vehicle.

3. Optus Outsourcing NMC.

Optus recently announced that it was outsourcing its Network Management centre functions to Nokia in a 'transfer of business' model. The Union has been informed that there will be field service persons also transferred. The dates for

transfer are the end of December for the field services personnel and the end of April 2018 for the NMC employees.

Optus has selected approximately 30-40 employees to remain at Optus NMC so they can manage the transition and also attend to issues that cannot be rectified by Nokia.

The remainder of the NMC employees are going through a selection process set up by Nokia so that they can man the new centre. The issues facing most of the NMC employees is whether to go if offered a position at Nokia or do they elect to remain at Optus.

Optus statement to employees currently is that if they are selected by Nokia and they do not pick up the position they will be regarded as having resigned from Optus. This is adding to the stress levels members are currently experiencing and the Union is quite concerned that this attitude is not beneficial to the parties concerned. The Branch is monitoring the situation.

4. Branch Poaching.

Members have contacted the Branch office to report that they have been approached by another Branch of the Union to join them as this branch is going broke and that we cannot look after our members. This is a despicable act coming from the same unionist a different branch.

Members who have contacted this office have stated that they are happy with the service they are receiving from this branch

and find it dis-heartening when there is this internal disunity within the union. Quite a few have said that they will resign from the union and not re-join any union in the future.



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This branch calls on members to be vigilant to this bad behaviour and contact this branch office immediately this happens.

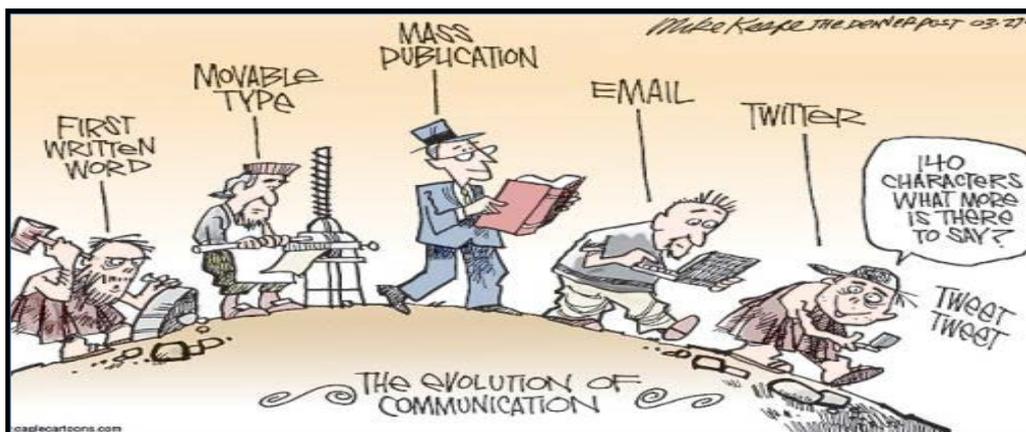
5. Canberra summit on asbestos safety highlights need for continued action.

Assistant Secretary Lee Walkington participated in the 4th annual Asbestos Safety and Eradication Summit in Canberra last month. The Summit was called by ASEA (Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency) which was established in 2013 with the aim of drawing together everyone in Australia

ACM (Asbestos Containing Materials) that are prevalent in the built environment such as

fibro cement roofing, fencing, wall board, insulation and dozens of other uses. As these products reach the end of their useful life they deteriorate and the fibres released enter the environment and are a known hazard to humans.

Asbestos containing products being imported with inadequate checking are still an issue. Building materials, car brake pads and children’s crayons were among the products, mostly from China, which tested for measurable levels of asbestos product.



involved with asbestos and the problems arising from its use. In a unique way, the ASEA has drawn together health professionals, academics, local, state and federal government departments, safety organisations, unions and asbestos removalists to pool information and discuss ways in which progress might be made in bringing about the complete removal of asbestos from the Australian environment.



The 2017 Summit highlighted the fact that although there was a complete ban on the use of asbestos in Australia from the 1980s onwards there are worrying trends that need urgent attention. Foremost is the ageing

Australian standards insist on zero asbestos detected but the standards of other countries allow for up to 6% asbestos and still have products labelled as “asbestos free”.

A lead talk by Tim Driscoll (Sydney School of Public Health at University of Sydney) highlighted the fact that there were over 4000 *asbestos related deaths* in Australia in 2017, the majority being lung cancers of which 766 were identified as mesothelioma, an incurable form of cancer of the lung lining, while another 77 deaths were of asbestiosis victims. Asbestos caused cancers of other parts of the body accounted for a further 188 deaths. While mesothelioma deaths now seem to have





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peaked, most likely as a result of the 1980s ban on asbestos use, the number of reported cases continues to climb and will do so for some years to come. Occupational deaths world wide from asbestos exposure were reported to be over 222,000 a year in 2017 with Australia having one of the highest rates of asbestos related deaths per capita. The global average of asbestos related deaths was 8 per 100,000 while the Australian average was 34 per 100,000.

While occupational exposure and deaths in Australia have declined there is concern now that a “third wave” of asbestos related deaths is upon us as home renovators operate with little concern for their own safety or that of their family members during their DIY home improvements. This is in addition to the exposure created by events like the Brisbane floods of 2011, cyclones in North Queensland and elsewhere (Darwin is still awash with 1974 Cyclone Tracy asbestos) homes lost to bushfires in various places, house and factory fires etc. This highlights the need to step up the campaign to educate all Australians and work towards creating an asbestos free environment.

International keynote speaker, Nienke Smith from the Dutch Ministry for Infrastructure and the Environment, spoke to the meeting about the decision of the Dutch Government to implement the complete removal of all asbestos roofing material from the Netherlands by 2024 with the incentive being tax concessions and replacement of asbestos roofing with solar panels. Canadian unionist, Sari Sairanen, also spoke about their recently successful campaign to halt the mining and export of asbestos in Canada.

Despite the important work carried out by ASEA over the past few years, it appears that the federal Turnbull government is determined to restrict its valuable work through budget cuts and threats to the Agency’s independence.



The loss of such a valuable centralising agency for change around the asbestos issue would be enormous and will inevitably result in more deaths in future years.

[Copies of the 2017 keynote talks can be obtained by contacting the CWU T&S Branch or from the ASEA at its website: www.asbestossafety.gov.au/]

6. Optus Belrose.

Optus have indicated that they are preparing for a restructure at Belrose Satellite station in the new year. Members are concerned that management is not informing them fully of the extent of the restructure. At present there changes proposed to job descriptions and in other instances members are encouraged to do additional training.

The planned restructure is obviously aimed at downsizing the work force so it expected that employees would be concerned and anxious about their future. We all have mortgages to pay and mouths to feed.

Members and the Union are keeping a close eye on any developments in regard to this matter.



7. RDO'S in Telstra.

Members are advised to refrain from working on their RDO's. This is an entitlement that you actually work the time in for. The additional time you every day counts towards your RDO hours.

Members should not be driving their Telstra vehicles on their RDO as this is not allowed. Some management have requested that employees service their vehicle on their RDO. This must not occur as this is your day off work. As stated in a previous article



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Telstra management are trying not pay you workers compensation when you have an accident driving your vehicle to and from work so what are they going to say when you have an accident on your RDO.

Members are advised that if circumstances require them to work on their RDO then all they should do is to arrange to move it to another day within the same pay period if possible.

Festive end-of-2017 greeting.

This will be the last *'On the Line'* for 2017 so it is time to send the usual greetings – and warnings.

First the warnings: Remember that the annual end-of-year party is not the time for truth-telling to management or for any other high-spirited behaviour that could end in tears.

Christmas may be supposed to be the time of good will to all but it is unwise to test this out in the workplace.

As for greetings, the CWU T&S Branch (NSW) wishes all its members a relaxed and safe Festive holidays.

And over and above this, we would like to thank all of our members for their on-going support for the Union over this past year.

The Branch Office will be closed from 12 noon 21 December 2017 and will reopen on the Wednesday 03 January 2018.

In case of an emergency over this period you are able to contact:

Alex Jansen **0418-231-146**

Lee Walkington **0419-605-000**



**We welcome your comments and contributions – send us an
email**

and let us know what you think.

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