



# UNION CONDEMNS TELSTRA CALL CENTRE CLOSURES

## WorkChoices will be used to reduce wages and conditions

**The CEPU has reacted angrily to plans by Telstra to reduce dramatically the number of customer service centers and employees in Service Advantage.**

Telstra will cut the number of its major Service Advantage Centres, which handle fault reporting and service activation, from 17 to 4, in Townsville, Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth. Centres currently located in Wollongong, Canberra, Launceston and Newcastle will be shut down entirely.

*Telstra will use Work Choices (WC) to replace its skilled and experienced workforce with much lower paid and inexperienced employees on new WC AWAs.*

The CEPU has warned that the move will result in poorer working conditions in the company and poorer service for customers.

Telstra management have made it abundantly clear that they will not give new employees a real choice of employment contracts; it is sign a new "Work Choice" AWA or no job. The real choice of being employed on the Award/EA instead of a Work Choice AWA will not be offered.

### Real job losses are extremely high

Telstra have said in their media release that there would be an overall net reduction of 500 jobs as a result of the decision but this does not give the full picture. The CEPU has been advised by Telstra that 931 permanent Telstra positions and 470 agency positions will be lost.

So over 1400 experienced people are going to be put out of work. In the CEPU's view, the nature of the reorganisation means that very few, if any, of these employees will be able to be redeployed within Service Advantage.

These centre closures and jobs losses will be devastating for the employees affected. The impact will

also be felt by their families and communities. Many of the workers (i.e. the agency staff) will not even have the protection of the union-negotiated redundancy agreement available to Telstra employees.

### Federal Government must act

The CEPU is calling upon the Federal Government to intervene to stop the closures or ensure that those affected get the same level of support the government has offered other groups of workers who have been retrenched in similar circumstances.

The Government has been quick to offer support for miners and timber workers when their jobs were threatened, so why not telecommunications workers? After all, it's the Government's own privatisation and industrial relations policies that have been driving cost cutting and job losses in Telstra over the last decade.

There should be a Government assistance package to help these workers cope with sudden unemployment and to help them find new jobs, especially as many of them are living in areas that are already suffering economically.

### Customer service must suffer

The CEPU has also warned the public that services will suffer as a result of these closures. You can't just shovel experienced staff out the door and not expect that to affect service.

If Telstra customers and competitors who use the Telstra network believe they are having trouble getting their fault complaints dealt with now, they are about to have a whole new experience in poor quality Telstra service.

To more than halve your current experienced workforce shows that Telstra has no appreciation of the skills and abilities of their current

Consultants and "Testers". It takes years for a "Tester", for instance, to become fully efficient, particularly on corporate and business customer services. How does Telstra expect to hold its most valuable customers in places like Brisbane, Perth, Townsville, Wollongong, Newcastle, and Launceston by retrenching experienced technical employees and providing a degraded service on key products such as BigPond broadband?

### CEPU actions

The CEPU is conducting a major public and political campaign against the centre closure and the use of Work Choices to reduce worker employment conditions and rights. The Union needs your support in this so please provide your ideas, information, questions and feedback on these job cuts and centre closures to the CEPU. (See below for details on how to contact the CEPU.)

Further meetings will be held with Telstra next week and members will be informed of any outcomes via CEPU Bulletins.

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DIVISIONAL PRESIDENT

For further information, to provide feedback or to contact the CEPU:

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