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## **EBA7 – member bulletin and survey**

It's approximately two weeks since the member survey was issued – and nearly 2300 member surveys on EBA7 have been completed and returned to the CEPU.

Here's a sample reaction from members via the survey:

- “What really gets up my nose is when managers say at the end of year how hard we the employees worked and Post makes such high profits, yet they only want to give us 3 or 4% pay rise and they give themselves a much bigger pay rise.”
- “PDO wage is low, without 15% people don't stay. Post wastes 12 weeks training and uniform etc. We lose good workers and end up doing more cut-ups. This is the thin end of the wedge. Soon everyone is 6.30 and no penalties.”
- “I want people who do the same job to get paid the same not \$105 per week less. Maintaining existing entitlements for current and new employees is critical.”
- “How does Australia Post expect us to collect the \$500 bonus when we are being overworked due to shortages of staff. The dedicated slotters and delivery simply isn't working.”
- “Fair go for workers. Highlight the greed and double standard of management.”
- “Payout unused sick leave or at least a % of it. It would be a nice bonus for all those who have worked hard and not taken sick leave when they retire.”
- “Australia Post negotiators keep telling us what a great offer it is but that's not their role. It's up to them to put the offer on the table but we will decide it's good or not.”
- “WorkChoices makes staff worse off.”
- “Would like to say I'm very grateful to the union for standing up for my rights and those of all, Australians, giving us a fair go and some measure of security – well done!”

## **EBA7 – members telling us like they see it**

To be fair, there have also been some comments like the following:

- “I am happy with Australia Post EBA7 offer and can't wait to vote for it.”
- “It's a great offer.”

The CEPU doesn't believe the EBA is good enough to recommend to members yet. But we appreciate all members' comments and will be guided by the majority view. So make sure you have your say.

And we hear the members views, loud and clear – question 6 was tricky! “How on earth do you answer question 6?” asks one member quite rightly. We apologise, the response for question 6 should have been ‘worse, same or better’ not yes or no. Sorry for the confusion – but regardless, members have told us they’ve noticed a worsening of the attitude of some managers since WorkChoices came in last year.

Please send your completed survey now so you can have your say in the Agreement that will affect your wages and conditions in the years ahead. If you have already returned your survey to the CEPU, thank you.

## **Small businesses warned about mail fraud**

The CEPU has called on small businesses across the country to contact Australia Post about measures to protect themselves against mail fraud after falling foul of recent fraudulent mail incident.

In just over one week in early June three separate fraudulent items posing as CEPU material, were received by the organisation’s 10,000 members in NSW.

“We were totally outraged by this act – but we were particularly shocked by the indifference we confronted from Australia Post when we asked them to help us stop this type of activity,” said the CEPU’s Divisional Secretary Ed Husic.

The fraud involved the use of envelopes bearing the CEPU’s logo along with a printed return address belonging to its NSW Branch. Within the envelope was correspondence marked up on a fake letterhead – bearing a forged senior official’s signature. The letter was part of a dirty tricks campaign run to coincide with the union’s election, currently running across the country.

“These days anyone can walk into a major retail outlet and buy sophisticated, off-the-shelf scanners and printers that could be wrongly used to engage in this type of act,” Mr Husic said “The possible threat of this type of fraud occurring again is real – and Australia Post should treat this matter seriously and act quickly,” he said.

Mr Husic outlined how CEPU – like most major mail customers – hold reply paid and postage paid accounts with Australia Post. “Our NSW State Branch follows a standard, regular procedure in lodging mail close to its Parramatta offices,” he said.

“On three occasions a person not associated with our organisation lodged mail with Australia Post and Post management did not block the distribution of this material. As a result of this fraudulent behaviour our fee paying members do not know if they are being legitimately contacted by their union about issues that have importance to them.

“We wrote – as a customer – on two occasions to Australia Post about this issue. The matter was even raised in Federal Parliament this week. After our second letter we received a response from Australia Post headquarters informing us that a response would be provided ‘as soon as possible’.

“With three fraudulent letters issued in seven days, and after waiting three business days for Post to respond, the suggestion of action ‘as soon as possible’ shows Post is not serious about tackling mail fraud.

“We’re a major organisation that knows how Post operates, we know who to contact when this type of incident occurred -- and even that’s no help when we call for steps to clamp down on fraud. So imagine what would happen if Post applied the same indifference to a small business owner desperate to quickly deal with mail fraud?

“While Post ignores these acts, that small business’s brand and reputation would be severely affected and it might take them months to recover financially from such an incident.

“We think small businesses – particularly those in NSW – should protect themselves now. “Small business owners concerned about this type of threat – and who are keen to protect themselves – should contact the offices of Australia Post’s State Manager, Commercial Division. “They should seek advice from these Managers about what steps Post can put in place to ensure small businesses aren’t caught out the way we were,” Mr Husic said.

Stop Press: 15 minutes after the CEPU issued a media release on this issue, Australia Post faxed its advice to the CEPU NSW P&T Branch.

## **Post Logistics EA**

Negotiations for Post Logistics Enterprise Agreement has progressed slowly with the focus on protecting Post Logistic members’ rights and entitlements against the threat of workchoices.

Members will maintain their rights to be consulted prior to significant change in the workplace. Members will also be able to have disputes about unresolved work issues taken to the AIRC.

Negotiations will next focus on changes to the Post Logistics career structure. These changes are necessary to ensure workers receive proper levels of pay for their skills.

Members will be provided with further feedback after the next round of negotiations. Members who wish to provide feedback should contact their Branch Organisers

## **Postal workers in UK back strike action**

Postal workers have voted strongly in favour of taking industrial action over pay, in what would be the first national postal strike since 1996.

The CWU is in dispute with the Royal Mail over its 2.5% pay offer. A series of walkouts will now be held by about 130,000 CWU members unless new talks can lead to a breakthrough in the dispute.

Deputy General Secretary, Dave Ward said:

“This yes vote shows absolutely clearly that Royal Mail workers have rejected the company’s business plan, the company’s leadership and the unacceptable pay offer. Royal Mail leaders say they listen to people; this is the clearest message they have ever had. Royal Mail has to listen and return to serious negotiations.”

CEPU members will be sending Australia Post a very clear message via the member survey. Australia Post would be well advised to start listening or face the consequences.

## **AWA wage cuts legal says Government watchdog**

The Government’s own workplace watchdog, the Office of Workplace Services (OWS), has given its seal of approval to Telstra AWAs which cut wages by as much as \$14,000. What clearer indication could there be of what these employment contracts are all about?

As the CEPU reported to members a few weeks ago, Telstra recently put a group of young Communications Technicians who had just finished training on AWAs that gave them considerably less money and poorer conditions than other AWA-based staff (let alone award-based employees) doing the same work.

The CEPU wrote to the OWS about the contracts and has now been told by that Office that they are perfectly legal. It is just as the CEPU has always said. All these contracts had to offer in order to be legal was the five minimum conditions, including the present minimum wage of \$511 a week.

The new employers were asked to sign the AWAs just a few days before the Government's new "fairness test" was designed to take effect. But the union does not believe that that test will make any major difference to the basic unfairness of the take-it-or-leave-it AWA system, which gives employers all the power in determining wages and conditions.

The only answer is to get rid of AWAs altogether. That is what the CEPU, together with the rest of the union movement, is committed to achieving.

## **Big drop in pay under WorkChoices**

Wage increases in private sector collective agreements have dropped in the first year of WorkChoices from 4% a year to 3.5%. This is despite unemployment at near-record lows.

Across both the public and private sector, increases have also dipped, from 3.8% before WorkChoices, to 3.7% in March 2007.

More than a third of agreements in the March quarter of 2007 paid increases of 3.3% or less.

As members will be aware, WorkChoices is designed to make it harder for employees to achieve good results from collective bargaining. It is now harder than ever, for instance, to take industrial action in support of a collective agreement – a secret ballot has to be held first.

And it has become illegal even to ask for certain conditions, in such an agreement.

In the meantime, as shown below, company profits are at record highs as wealth gets redistributed away from working people and into the pockets of company executives and their shareholders.

## **Record high company profits after first year of WorkChoices**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), corporate Australia is doing very nicely under WorkChoices.

Recent ABS figures show that the profit share of national income has grown to a record high of 28.1% in the 12 months since WorkChoices was introduced, while the wages share has fallen to a 30-year low of 53.3%.

The ABS figures show a significant shift in the profit and wages shares from a year earlier. When WorkChoices took effect, the wages share was 53.6%, while the profit share was 26.9%.

So it's no wonder that the Australian business sector, led by the big mining companies, is worried about a Labor victory at the next election and has agreed to run a media campaign in support of WorkChoices. You can bet, though, that they won't be quoting these ABS figures.

## **Fairness test giving employees what they already had**

Flinders University's Professor Andrew Stewart says the Coalition's proposed fairness test leaves unclear whether employers would be able to offer entitlements that employees already had as "fair compensation" for conditions that were taken away.

In his submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Coalition's safety net legislation, Stewart makes the point that the pizza-as-compensation issue is still possible under the fairness test legislation. While the legislation does not define significant value the Workplace Authority could still take free pizzas into account in assessing fair compensation.

The Howard Government's failure to define fair compensation leaves unanswered all sorts of questions. For example, Stewart says 'Could an employer argue that by including provision for long service leave in an agreement, this should be counted as part of the 'compensation' for the loss of certain protected conditions – even though the employer has already previously recognised an obligation to provide such leave?'

What if an employee working under a collective agreement with a pay rate 20% over the award plus weekend penalty rates is offered an AWA with the same pay rate, but no penalty rates. 'Can the employer say that the fact that the basic pay rate is higher than it is legally required to be is in itself 'fair compensation' for the loss of the penalty rates – even though the worker's take-home pay will now fall?' asks Stewart.

The other issue raised by Stewart related to potential problems with relying on a large number of officials forming their own 'essentially subjective' opinions about fair compensation, with their decisions not made public.

## **ACTU launches health and safety charter**

A new charter of workplace rights for occupational health and safety and workers' compensation which sets out the minimum health and safety and compensation standards was launched last week by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

The ACTU is calling on all state and territory governments along with the Federal Government to adopt these minimum health and safety and compensation standards and to end the "blame game" between different levels of government on the issue.

The Charter includes the right of workers to be represented by trade unions on health and safety matters, the right to receive 100 per cent income replacement for an injury, and an absolute duty of care on employers to provide healthy and safe workplaces.

The ACTU initiative is a response to recent changes to safety and compensation laws introduced by the Howard Government. As reported in earlier Bulletins, workers' rights, entitlements and protections are under threat from these moves.

The ACTU says that while state governments, business and unions agree that there is a need for a nationally consistent approach to health and safety across the country, the Federal Government is driving a race to the bottom.

The aim of the Charter is to provide a better, fairer and safer vision for health and safety in Australia and to assist all levels of government to harmonise their health and safety and workers' compensation legislation to the highest standards.

