

Telstra Enterprise Agreement 2015

Bargaining Bulletin #9

2 July 2015

The parties involved in the current round of enterprise bargaining at Telstra met for the 10th time on Wednesday 1 July.

The meeting focussed largely on items on which there has already been some discussion, although Telstra did put a new proposal on the table in relation to RDOs (as discussed below). The meeting also dealt with some minor drafting changes that are needed to bring the new agreement into line with legislative changes.

Extended shifts.

The negotiators are still finalising the wording of a new agreement that will cover shifts of varying lengths beyond 10 and up to 12 hours. In particular, the CWU is concerned to ensure that there is no weakening of the health and safety protections that currently apply to performance of 12 hour shifts.

The meeting also discussed the interaction between the current EA provisions governing Group Flexibility Agreements (GFAs) and the proposed new shift agreement. Currently, Telstra can't require employees working under a GFA to work more than 10 ordinary hours in any day. This provision may need to be amended to reflect the new shift arrangements –if they are agreed upon.

Leave

As reported early in this round of bargaining, there are no major changes being proposed by Telstra to existing leave entitlements and there is one new form of leave – Domestic Violence Leave – that will be referenced in the new EA.

However, the parties considered some minor changes to current arrangements that will be of interest to CWU members. During the pre-EA consultations, some members suggested that the cap on the number of weeks' leave that can be cashed out (ie 2 weeks) should be removed. Telstra has agreed to this, though employees will still need to have at least 4 weeks accrued leave left after the cash-out.

The unions are also concerned, of course, that employees do actually take sufficient leave to give them a decent break from work routines. Some further wording around this point is being considered.

In the case of parental leave, the section relating to the amount of leave a secondary carer can take has been updated from 3 to 8 weeks in line with legislation. Telstra is not proposing any change, however, to the amount of paid leave available to either primary or secondary carers.

RDOs

Availability of RDOs was high on the list of issues CWU members wanted addressed in this round of bargaining.

The CWU has proposed that the new EA provides all employees with access to RDOs if they are working in an area where RDOs are available. This would basically reinstate the provision which existed before the current EA which now limits availability of RDOs to individuals – as opposed to work areas – that already have access to them.

Telstra wants to keep the current arrangements. At the same time it has put forward a counter claim that would, in special circumstances, allow RDOs to be worked – with appropriate compensation.

Negotiations around these claims and counterclaims are at a preliminary stage only.

Redundancy, redeployment and reassignment.

Discussion around these inter-related issues continued, but with little movement from either side at this stage.

All parties to the discussions acknowledge that the roles available within the Telstra workforce are changing and will continue to change over the coming years. So redeployment, supported by appropriate

training, must play a major part in any strategy for retaining skills inside Telstra and providing security for its employees.

On the other hand, the CWU believes its members – and all other Telstra employees – will resist any changes to the current EA that could result in their being obliged to take up jobs for which they are not suited when their former roles have become redundant.

Finding the right balance in this area will be a major challenge for these negotiations.

Dispute resolution.

Telstra says it has received legal advice which may require some minor changes to the wording of the dispute resolution clause. The proposed changes relate to state and federal government procurement rules. The unions have asked for further particulars before considering the proposal.

Next meeting.

The next full negotiating meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 July.