

## Telstra Enterprise Agreement 2015

### Bargaining Bulletin #6

10 June 2015

The seventh regular meeting in the current Telstra Enterprise Agreement negotiations was held on Tuesday 9 June. As usual, it was attended by representatives of the three unions involved in the negotiations – CWU, CPSU and Professionals Australia – and (in this case) by one individual bargaining representative.

#### **Unions present consolidated claims.**

The meeting began with the unions presenting a consolidated list of their claims. This was largely a housekeeping matter, with the list designed to allow all the parties to have a clear idea of where the union claims overlapped and where there were items specific to particular unions.

There has been no change in the CWU's claims from those previously reported.

#### **Telstra proposals**

The greater part of the meeting was taken up with discussion of two sets of proposals from Telstra: one relating to shift and scheduling arrangements and the other to changes in redundancy procedures (but not payout entitlements).

- **Shift arrangements.**

During negotiations, Telstra has flagged that it would like to vary the current Enterprise

Agreement to allow the introduction of shifts of between 10 and 12 hour duration. It has also proposed simplifying the provisions

currently governing the introduction and operation of 12 hour shifts.

These proposals were considered in detail for the first time at the 9 June meeting.

Currently, shift lengths in Telstra are limited to a 10 hour span except in the case of 12 hour shifts which are governed by the *12 Hour Shift Operations Agreement 1990*. The Telstra proposal would allow shifts of variable lengths up to and including 12 hours.

The unions have indicated that their chief concern is that, under this proposal, employees working 10 hour shifts may find themselves having to work longer hours without their agreement. The CWU's position is that:

- For employees currently working ordinary hours, moving to shift work must be voluntary (as per the current EA).
- For employees currently working 10 hour shifts, doing anything beyond a 10 hour shift must also be voluntary (as per the current *12 Hour Shift Operations Agreement*).

The CWU has also indicated that it would want to see other core protections provided by the 12 Hour Shift Agreement, especially those relating to health and safety, retained in any new arrangements.

The 9 June meeting looked at the current 12 Hour Shift Agreement in detail and considered how it might be simplified without weakening these protections. We also discussed how the provisions of the agreement could be applied to other extended shifts.

These issues will be discussed further at the next full negotiating meeting next week.

- **Redundancy, redeployment and reassignment.**

The second Telstra proposal discussed relates to redundancy, redeployment and reassignment procedures (but not payments).

At the beginning of these negotiations, Telstra made it clear that the composition of its future workforce, in terms of skills and experience, was a major issue for the company.

Part of this is to do with Telstra's expansion into Asia-Pacific where it wants to operate as a digital services provider to large corporates.

But on the home front it wants to capitalise on the opportunities relating to the NBN project that are opening up, especially with the current government's adoption of the multi-technology model.

This is leading to a much stronger emphasis on retraining, reassignment and redeployment – at least within the field workforce – than we have seen for most of the last 20 years. Telstra says that they want to make redundancy a last, rather than a first, option.

CWU members have themselves said that job security is one of their major concerns and the union welcomes any moves that will give greater certainty and opportunity to Telstra employees.

But redeployment and reassignment processes can open up their own issues such as the suitability of new roles, availability of training and salary maintenance.

These are matters already dealt with in the reassignment provisions in Section 3 of the current EA (Moving between jobs). Future discussions are likely to focus on the interaction between these provisions and the current redundancy and redeployment procedures in Section 8.