

E-BULLETIN Postal

#16. Friday, 6 November 2015



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1. Union members earn more money

It's a fact. Union members earn higher wages than non-union workers.

New data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that in August 2014 the median weekly earnings for persons who were trade union members was \$1,200 compared to \$960 for employed persons who were not represented by unions.



But the number of persons belonging to a union fell to 1.6 million. The union membership rate has steadily declined from 40% to 15% from August 1992 to August 2014 (43% to 14% for males and 35% to 16% for females).

The fact that the vast majority of workers are not unionised means that they make less money than they could and that money goes to relatively rich company executives rather than the many poorer workers.

While union density is better in Australia Post the fact is there are non-union members even in Post. This means that Post is able to tilt the table so more dollars in lifetime earnings spills into its pocket. If you want to change that then talk to your work mates about joining the CWU.

The industries with the most union members include health, education, public safety, retail, construction, manufacturing, transport and warehousing according to the ABS.

Other interesting facts about union membership include:

- 51% were males;
- 91% had paid leave entitlements;
- 39% of public sector workers were union members, compared to only 10% of private sector workers;
- 94% of 15–19 year olds have never been a union member; and
- 23% of employed persons aged 55–59 years are currently union members and of those 85% have been for over five years.

2. Post sell off franchised Post Offices



Australia Post has commenced to sell off its franchised Post Offices and convert them into LPOs. The conversion has occurred without any consultation with the union and in breach of the Australia Post enterprise agreement.

Under the enterprise agreement, Post must comply with the Retail Post Conversion Policy. The Retail Post Conversion policy makes it clear that there should be consultation with the union prior to any conversion of Post Offices to LPOs occurring. As well conversions may only occur on the basis that the Post office is unprofitable.

Given the circumstances the CWU has sought an urgent undertaking from Post to stop the conversion of franchised Post Offices to LPOs until there has been consultation on this issue.

3. Productivity Commission no fan of workers or unions

The Productivity Commission has released its final report into workplace relations. If you read the Commission's draft report (August 2015) then you know that it is no fan of workers or their unions.

The report discusses cutting penalty rates, constraining minimum wage increases and ensuring employers do not have to pay for leave for newly designated public holidays. On bargaining the report proposes replacing the 'better off overall test' with a no-disadvantage test and changes to labour flexibility with a new type of 'enterprise contract' that could be offered to prospective employees. No ballot would be required for the enterprise contract nor would unions be involved in its preparation.



Much can be read into this report. In particular the Coalition's agenda that wage increases, limited use of individual flexibility arrangements and the role of unions are bad for companies.

It is such a tired argument that unions had their place in the past. Receiving a better wage is a benefit of unionism but what about on the job safety, better training, being treated with respect by your employer, the list goes on. Unions may not be good for business but they are good for workers.

The report is expected to be a starting point for the Coalition's workplace relations' policy for the next election.

4. Mail officer states Post's breach of OHS caused physical injuries



A Mail Officer has told the AAT that Australia Post did not follow its own OHS Policies or the National Code of Practice for Hazardous Manual Tasks when it required the CWU member to perform work lifting unduly heavy loads without regard to safe work durations or task rotations. The member said she believes that the frequent breaches of these policies and national code resulted in her physical injuries.

The member described the work as physically demanding laboring type work that involved repetitive and sustained loading and unloading heavy items (mail and parcels) over long periods of time. They estimated that during the course of a shift they would lift many tonnes on their own.

In the new/ expanded parcel facilities Post employs safe work durations of approximately 2 hours and task rotation between lifting tasks and repetitive movement tasks. The safe work durations were determined as a result of assessing the recommended weight limit for each new task using NIOSH assessment from the Code of Practice. Without task duration the work rate for some new tasks would have been zero lifts per minute. This was done to benefit Post.

The same safe work durations and task rotation arrangements should be applied to all facilities handling parcels.

The case is still before the AAT. The CWU is assisting the member.

5. CWU calls on Decipha to ensure fair pay and shift penalties

After initially offering 3%pa over 3 year Decipha now wants to cut the pay offer to pay for the increase in the 15% penalty from 4am to 8am. Instead of 3% paid in October each year, Decipha now proposes to pay 3% in first year (Oct 2015) and 1½ (Oct 2016) x 1½ (April 2017) in second year and 1½ (Oct 2017) x 1½ (April 2018) third year.

RESPECT

This is not acceptable. Hard working Decipha workers would lose hundreds of \$\$\$.

Notwithstanding the above, Decipha has another problem. Their offer does not get them over the “better off overall test” (BOOT test). Under the new relevant award workers starting at 4am would get overtime (time and half for first three hours) and overtime again for any hours that are in addition to their contracted hours.

To try and overcome this where members are regularly working longer Decipha said it will review contracted hours. For example, if contracted 4 hours but regularly working 6 hours then contracted hours will be adjusted. This should have been done a long time ago. It is being done now to benefit Decipha!

The offer in its current form is unfair and disrespectful to all Decipha workers.

CWU members call on Decipha to finalise the EA by:

- Agreeing to a 3%pa increase paid in October of each year of agreement.
- Ensuring no worker is worse off under the agreement than under the relevant Award.

One of our next steps is to seek members’ approval for industrial action, particularly action that will not cause loss of pay.

**We welcome your comments and contributions –
send us an email and let us know what you think via cwuwa@iinet.net.au
Check out our webpage at www.cwuwa.org**

Yours in Solidarity,



**Barry McVee
Branch Secretary**