

# E-BULLETIN Telecommunications

## #8. Wednesday, 18 May 2016

1. Visionstream Telecommunications EA goes to ballot.
2. Telstra Wideband design review.
3. Telstra commits extra \$50 million to mobile network.
4. Cabling registry seeks feedback on compliance.
5. Budget 2016: government NBN funding winds down...
6. ..and mobile subsidies increase.
7. Budget 2016: intern plan "just about the worst idea ever".
8. Premier League rights: has Optus kicked own goal?
9. Verizon strike enters fifth week.

### 1. Visionstream Telecommunications EA goes to ballot

Voting on the proposed new Visionstream Telecommunications Enterprise Agreement (EA) will be held on Monday 16 May. Voting will take place on Monday 16 May 2016, between 8am and 7pm Eastern Standard Time (EST) by electronic (SMS) ballot.



This EA covers employees of the former Silcar Telecommunications, now part of Visionstream. Negotiations for the agreement began late last year, with the CWU becoming involved on behalf of its members in late

January. Since then there have been regular meetings between Visionstream, the CWU and other bargaining representatives.

Agreement has been reached on a number of items that employees identified as issues at the beginning of negotiations. We have negotiated improvements to discipline procedures, protections against being forced onto shift work and removal of proposals that could have allowed staff to be demoted during the translation to the new classification structure proposed.

Proposals for a stand-by roster remain controversial, but negotiators have limited the scope for introduction of such rosters and those on-call will be eligible for significant allowances (\$510 a week).

The agreement also provides further new allowances for performance of higher duties and for work requiring an electricians licence or air conditioning licence.

But it is the wage rise that is likely to be the real sticking point with many employees. The three year agreement contains wage rises of 2.5% per annum or, in the case if Year 3, CPI – whichever is higher.

If the cost of living continues to trend downwards, this offer will represent a real (ie above inflation) wage rise, but not by much! If CPI rises, there may be little overall wage gain.

The CWU considers that the wage offer does not do justice to the value that these employees create for the company. However, members and other employees will now have to decide whether, overall, the agreement will provide acceptable conditions and protections over the next 3 years.

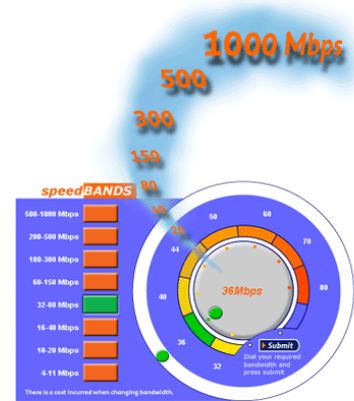
## 2. Telstra Wideband design review

The CWU expects to meet with Telstra during the week beginning Monday 16 May to discuss further management's recent review of bandings in Wideband design.

Over the last two weeks, the CWU has been surveying members in order to get a better understanding of what Telstra's review is going to mean for members, both now and in the future.

We are focussing, in the first instance, on members who are employed in the five support roles identified by Telstra which range from TW9 to CFW4. In particular, we need to know whether staff who have been consistently performing higher duties on a long term basis have been reclassified at the higher level.

We also need to hear from members who believe they have not been correctly banded during this exercise and/or think that their new "Success Profile" does not reflect the work they actually do.



If you have not filled out a questionnaire yet, please contact your state branch at [cwuwa@iinet.net.au](mailto:cwuwa@iinet.net.au)

## 3. Telstra commits extra \$50m to mobile network

Telstra will spend a further \$50 million on mobile network monitoring and management in response to the series of outages in recent months.

The spend commitment comes at the end of a review of network performance carried out by IT and tech solutions provider, Tech Mahindra, together with Telstra's vendor partners. It was announced at Telstra's Investor Day briefing on 2 May.



\$25 million will be spent on new traffic monitoring systems and a further \$25 million on network upgrades to add capacity for re-registration and reconnection procedures.

Telstra has said that during the outages, the impacts of original network failures were amplified by congestion, when thousands of customers attempted to reconnect with the network at the same time.

Despite the network failures, Tech Mahindra executive consultant, David Williamson, told the Investor Day audience that Telstra's

network was one of the few that could be really described as world class. That was based, he said, on the quality of its spectrum, its vendor relationships AND its "in-house capabilities".

The E-bulletin assumes "in-house capabilities" means staff – in-house, on shore staff, not outsourced, off shore staff.

Is Telstra listening?

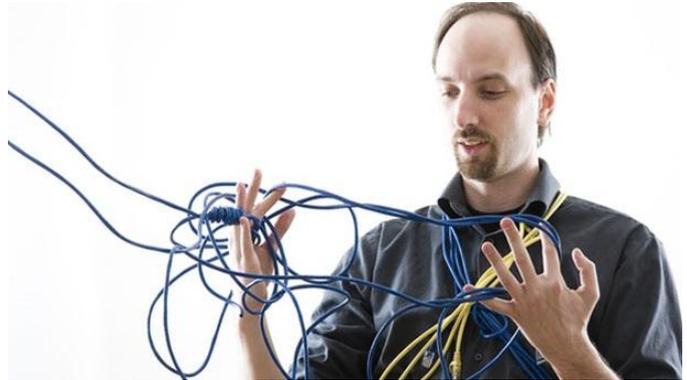
## 4. Cabling registry seeks feedback on compliance

The CWU has been contacted by TITAB Australia in relation to customer cabling compliance issues.

TITAB Australia is one of three organisations which are accredited by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to register customer cabling workers under the Cabling Provider Rules. It also provides advice to ACMA about compliance with the Rules in order to assist ACMA target its auditing activities.

TITAB is seeking feedback from industry on current levels of compliance in the areas below:

- separation
- earthing
- distributors and record keeping
- non-use of TCA 1 forms
- non-compliant products/cable
- cabler registration and lack of mandated endorsements.



E-bulletin readers who have information that might be useful to TITAB should send it through to the CWU at [cwuwa@inet.net.au](mailto:cwuwa@inet.net.au).

## 5. Budget 2016: government NBN funding winds down ...

Direct government equity injections into the NBN will come to an end with the \$8.8 billion allocation in this year's federal budget. In line with the projections in the nbn 2016 Corporate Plan, new sources of funding will have to be found by mid- 2017.

It has always been the policy of both major political parties that the NBN be funded by a mixture of debt and equity, with the Coalition's NBN policy capping government equity at \$29.5 billion – slightly higher than the \$27.5 billion figure under Labor.



The budget papers confirm that nbn may need to raise nearly as much again – between \$16.6 billion and \$26.5 billion – to complete the build.

The question facing government will be whether such funds will be forthcoming, given the uncertain finances of the project.

It is widely expected that some form of government guarantee will have to underpin the debt raising if it is to be successful. Meanwhile

the budget flags the possible need to provide further interim funding for the project should the debt raising exercise not proceed smoothly.

2017 is shaping up as a year when the financial challenges facing the NBN project – as opposed to the technological and logistic ones – will take centre stage. Those challenges will present a major –and no doubt unwelcome – test of whichever party takes office after the coming election.

## 6. ..and mobile subsidies increase

While signalling the end of Commonwealth government equity funding of the NBN, the 2016 federal budget commits the government to outlaying \$77 million for the Mobile Blackspots Programme this coming financial year.

This represents the balance of the \$100 million allocated under Round 1 of the programme, with \$23 million already allocated in the 2015/6 budget. Round 1 will see 499 new mobile base stations rolled out by Telstra (429) and Vodafone (70) over a 3 year period.

The roll-out is being co-funded by the Commonwealth, Telstra and Vodafone and state governments. Some \$1.7 million has also been provided by local governments, businesses and community organisations.

The provision of mobile services to all Australians does not currently form part of the Universal Service Obligation (USO), despite the growing centrality of this mode of communication to both social and commercial life.



This could change, depending on the outcomes of the USO Review to be conducted by the Productivity Commission. In the meantime, however, the Blackspots Programme is generally regarded as one of the more successful initiatives taken by government to address market failure in the telecommunications area.

A further \$60 million has been committed by the Commonwealth for round 2 of the programme, with applications due from mobile network operators and infrastructure providers by 14 June 2016.

## 7. Budget 2016: intern plan “just about the worst idea ever”

Unions say that the Coalition government’s internship scheme, announced in the federal budget, is “just about the worst idea ever.”

Without safeguards, they say, it will simply be a job destruction, not a job creation, plan.



Australian Unions  
Join For Better  
@unionsaustralia

CONFIRMED: Interns will not be covered by workers compensation laws. ⚠️ #auspol  
#estimates #Budget2016

Under the PaTH scheme, employers would be paid \$1,000 by the government (ie the taxpayer) to take on young job seekers.

The employer wouldn’t have to pay any wages and if the “interns” worked 25 hours in a week, they would be given \$200 (\$4 an hour) by the government on top of their Newstart allowance.

The minimum wage is currently \$17.29 per hour, saving business a total of \$432.25 for 25 hours work per week per employee.

So why take on an entry level employee when you can have access to a pool of free labour as part of a taxpayer funded young worker exploitation scheme?

“Subsidising long term unemployed to perform low skilled work in supermarkets is not a plan to create, real lasting jobs,” says ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver.

“The government should be investing in TAFE, higher education and apprenticeships - but these have all been cut.”

## 8. Premier League rights: has Optus kicked own goal?

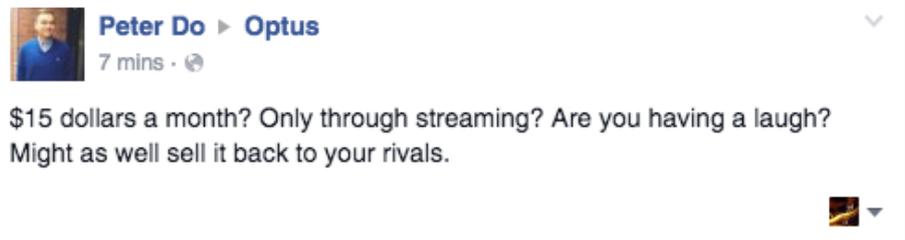
Optus has announced its offerings for English Premier League (EPL) viewers - and footy fans are hopping mad.

Optus acquired the EPL rights last year, at considerable expense, as part of a strategy to diversify its service offerings. EPL viewers, who had previously been able to watch EPL games as part of Foxtel's sports package, had hoped that the rights change would only mean they would now have to pay Optus a fee to view the game.

Not so. Optus is only offering EPL access as part of a service bundle.

You can watch the Premier League for free - if you are already on an Optus plan of more than \$85 per month.

You can also watch it for as little as \$15 per month - as long as you already have a postpaid mobile, mobile broadband or home (ie fixed) broadband subscription.



But you can't watch it through a stand-alone EPL subscription.

This makes sense from Optus' perspective. Having paid big dollars to outbid Foxtel for the EPL rights – reportedly three times the price of the previous Foxtel deal - it now needs to use the EPL “bait” to draw more customers onto its networks. But from the point of view of non-Optus customers, this is a kind of blackmail.



And for those currently locked in to plans with other mobile and broadband service providers there is the prospect of having to pay twice to be able to watch the footy.

Social media has been alight with complaints from EPL fans.

And consumer watchdog, Choice magazine, claimed it would be cheaper to fly to London to watch a game than to take up the Optus offerings.

Optus cannot afford to get this one wrong – and neither can its employees who have already been hit with one round of redundancies driven in large part by the expenses associated with Optus' sports strategies.

Actual consumer response will become clearer when pre-ordering for the service opens later this month. But Optus will need to remain open to alternative pricing strategies should the current negative reaction prove to be sustained and widespread.

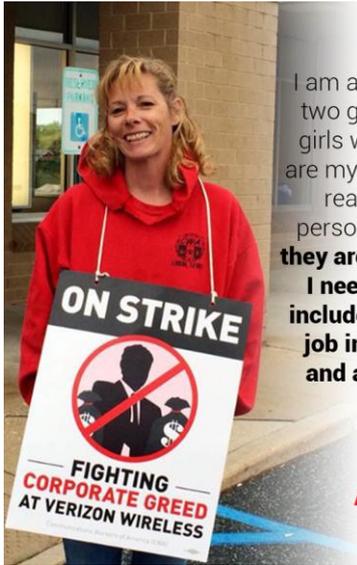
## 9. Verizon strike enters fifth week

Workers at US telecommunications giant, Verizon, have now been on strike for over a month in pursuit of job security, fair working conditions and decent wages and benefits.

On April 13, some 39,000 members of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) walked off the job after negotiations for a new agreement reached a stalemate.

One of the key issues of the strike is the ongoing offshoring of call centre jobs and the impact of such moves on local US communities.

Employees are also resisting a Verizon proposal that would see them required to work in distant locations for up to two months at a time. Under the current contract, employees can't be required to work more than 35 miles away.



I am a single mother of two gorgeous teenage girls who I adore. They are my life. They are the reason that I am the person I am today, and **they are the reason that I need a contract that includes job security, a job in my community, and affordable health benefits.**

**Amanda Poe**  
Delaware

And there's also the issue of health benefits, which Verizon wants employees to pay more towards, and pensions, which Verizon wants in some cases to freeze. Not bad for a company whose profits have recently been running at some US\$1 billion a month.

On May 5, striking workers held a national day of action to coincide with the company's shareholder meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. 300,000 petitions were presented to Verizon at the shareholders meeting and protests took place outside the meeting. Protests also took place in more than 17 communities across the US.

Verizon, meanwhile, has trained thousands of non-union workers to take union workers' jobs while they're on strike.

The company has also has been shifting customer service calls to the Philippines, causing massive disruptions to service and angering customers. The CWA has sent a delegation of striking workers to the Philippines to protest against the transfer of work and talk to the Philippino workers being forced to handle the transferred calls.

**We welcome your comments and feedback.  
Send us an email and let us know what you think  
via [cwuwa@iinet.net.au](mailto:cwuwa@iinet.net.au).**

**Check out our webpage at [www.cwuwa.org](http://www.cwuwa.org)**

Regards,

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Branch Secretary

Clinton Thomas  
Branch Organiser (Telecommunications)

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