

COMMUNICATION

TELCO NEWS

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CEPU SKILLS AUDIT

Members have been raising the issue of training or lack of training in Telstra, especially training in fibre optics given the NBN rollout. Enclosed you will find a skills and training questionnaire, we urge you to complete it and return it to the CEPU. The purpose of the survey is twofold, firstly are you getting paid at the right band level?

Secondly would you like to upskill or retrain to take advantage of future employment opportunities?

Do the survey today.



NBN

The union has produced a number of extensive reports on what is going on with this massive project that will determine the future of telecommunications in Australia.

The project is still a work in progress at many levels. Members should contact us if you would like a copy mailed or emailed to you.

Below is a just a snap-shot of issues and events.

NBN IN A NUTSHELL!

8 years to build

10 – 11 million premises passed

4,000 premises passed per day at the peak of construction

15,000 – 20,000 workers required at peak

250,000 km of fiber required



Legislation & regulatory framework

The Federal Parliament passed legislation splitting Telstra wholesale and retail operations on 26 November 2010. The move to split Telstra will still require the approval of Telstra shareholders. The Minister is confident shareholders would support this as there were very significant benefits for shareholders in agreeing with the deal.

Two bills which set out the regulatory framework of the NBN have been introduced to the Lower House and will be debated next year.

Industrial issues

In October, the union negotiated a favorable Enterprise Agreement with the NBN Co to cover 425 Melbourne based workers at the Network Operations Centre located at the Docklands.

The union is looking at the training needs of members and possible members who will work on the NBN project. The biggest danger is that contractors will 'import' overseas workers, top up their skills with inadequate "Recognition of Prior Learning" courses and employ them on sub-standard arrangements.

Our most important task is to organize the various contractors employees and sub-contractors so as to ensure a unionized workforce with good wages and conditions.

The union would like to see a NBN card 'mandated', similar to the current Red /White Cards on construction sites. This would entail training in OH&S and employment issues.

The union is preparing a framework Agreement for contractors to the NBN Co.

State of play

First we had the Tasmanian trials. Then there are the first 5 release sites including Brunswick (2,600 addresses – Aerial Designer – Bilfinger Berger, Underground Designer – GHD and Construction – Telstra)

The next rollout locations in Victoria are Brunswick, Bacchus Marsh and South Morang.

Skills & Training

Much of the discussion on skills and training has focused on the initial Fibre to the Premises rollout but the complexity of the network in total and the applications (both hardware and software) which operate the network once deployed have to be taken into account. The skills required for the NBN will range from ditch diggers to network engineers, and the qualifications required will range from Certificate 11 to Advanced Diploma. Many of the higher order skills required will centre on Certificate 111 and 1V in networking, network engineering, design and planning and management.

Many current and ex-Telstra staff either have these already or can up-skill or get recognition of prior learning. The skills fall under the Information and Communications Technology Training Package which contains 238 competency standards making up 26 formal qualifications from Cert 11 to Graduate Diploma. As the package is implemented in 2011 it is expected that funding for training will become available through the Productivity Places Program.

Next steps

Contract negotiations between the preferred tenders and NBN Co are expected to take place up to Christmas with 'Design & Construct' documentation then issued in Jan/Feb with a view to Contractors commencing construction work in April/May 2011.

ARE YOU ON AN EXPIRED AWA AND DO YOU WANT TO MOVE TO THE NEGOTIATED ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT?

If you wish to transfer to the Enterprise Agreement you must:

- Know your rights.
- Beware of any self serving nonsense from your managers and their HR managers on the issue.

If your AWA had reached or was beyond its expiry date prior to the commencement of the new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, you are guaranteed the right by law to move to the EBA if you are in a part of the business covered by an EBA. Do not accept any management filibustering on this issue. If you want to move you can and any artificial barriers put in your way by management is a breach of the law.

- If/when you transfer to the EBA, you are entitled to all the benefits of the EBA without exception.
- Your banding level in category 1 of the EBA is decided by the negotiated/agreed banding system, e.g. if you are working at a Band 7 level you must be paid Band 7.
- Do not merely accept management's assessment about your likely banding level if you transfer to the EBA. In most cases it is self serving nonsense designed to keep you on the AWA. Contact CEPU for advice and support.

NON EXPIRED AWAs

If your AWA has not yet reached its expiry date and you believe you are being disadvantaged by being on the AWA, please contact the union for advice. The union has a briefing document that outlines the situation for workers on unexpired AWAs.

REDUNDANCIES

As more members wish to remain in Telstra rather than take a VRP the union is starting to challenge forced redundancies with some success. For example, two lineys in NSW were told by their team leader that they should volunteer for redundancy else he would select them and give them a bad reference. One didn't volunteer and was selected. The union made an urgent application to FWA and obtained a hearing date. Before the FWA hearing Telstra cancelled the redundancy!

If you are getting the push but don't want to go please let us know.

DUES INCREASE FROM JANUARY 1, 2011 – first increase in 3 years

Members are also notified that there will be a membership fee increase as from 1 January, 2011. This is the first increase since 1 January 2008 even though Telco members have had a 6% increase in their pay since 2009. The Divisional Executive has made a decision to increase dues.

This means there will be an increase of 50 cents per week for full-time members, and pro-rata for the two part-time rates.

The Victorian Branch has introduced a new range of services for members during this time – Journey Cover (income protection if you have an accident to or from work); the Emergency Ambulance Scheme for you and your family, an increased Death benefit; and the Loan Scheme for Medical Reports associated with Compensation claims.

We are now investigating the possibility of offering Income Protection Insurance as an optional payment when you pay your union dues as well as a Legal Costs Insurance Scheme and will consult you further about these once all details are in hand.

Cameron Thiele new Communications Division Secretary



The CEPU Divisional Executive has appointed Cameron Thiele as the new Communications Division Secretary.

Cameron, formerly the secretary of the Communications Division's Queensland branch, replaces Ed Husic, who successfully stood for the federal seat of Chifley, NSW, in the recent federal election.

Cameron will have responsibility for the union's work in both the postal and telecommunications industries and will oversee the implementation of recent Enterprise Agreements in both sectors.

"In Telstra, I will be overseeing the implementation of a new enterprise bargaining agreement that ensures greater protections for the Telstra workforce still recovering from the removal of rights and conditions under Work Choices," he said.

Cameron says he is looking forward to working cooperatively with both Telstra and NBN Co and will be working hard to achieve fair collective agreements that deliver skilled, secure jobs for all Australian telecommunications workers.

Members will be able to vote on the position of Divisional Secretary in June 2011.

UNION TRAINING

The union has gained access to paid union training under the new Telstra EBA. The first paid training was conducted for 15 years took place on 1 December 2010. There will be more in the New Year. If you are interested in understanding the Telstra EBA, the Fair Work Act and Dispute Resolution please contact the union office.

TELSTRA PAYROLL ISSUES: STILL NO END IN SIGHT.

Problems with Telstra's the new SAP-based payroll systems are ongoing. The CEPU continues to receive many calls from members in regards to issues being generated by the new system and the lack of assistance forthcoming from the call centre. Some members have reported being treated quite rudely and hung up on.

The system has been failing to pay many Telstra employees correctly leaving them out of pocket, incorrectly taxed, incorrect superannuation deductions etc. This is just the latest 'transformation' bungle for Telstra.

Members have also raised the issue of Privacy as their personal banking details have apparently been offshored as part of the new payroll process. This issue goes to the heart of deficiencies in the Privacy Act as employees do not enjoy the same protections as they do as an ordinary person. 'Employee records are not subject to Privacy Act protections.

If you are experiencing payroll problems please email the CEPU at cdptvic@cepu.asn.au and put 'Payroll issue' in the subject line and describe the problem. We will continue to take these issues up with Telstra.

TELSTRA'S 'CULTURE QUESTIONNAIRE:

MEMBERS FIND IT HILARIOUS!

Only Telstra could announce 1000+ job losses and in the same week implement yet another employee opinion survey, this time one aimed at finding out what kind of culture Telstra should aspire to! In a clumsy approach from Telstra's HR head honcho Andrea Grant, she invites employees to make a contribution to "to achieve a truly customer-centric culture".

The survey is considered as another demonstration of how out of touch with employees, customers and shareholders really are. How bad can a company be if they just do not get it? What part does Ms. Grant not understand? You cannot bully employees through unrealistic performance demands, prolong negotiations for a new enterprise agreement and then discriminate against employees who wanted a union negotiated agreement by offering an inferior payrise. Telstra say's 'we value our people' when employees know that is not at all true. What effect does Ms. Grant think Telstra's current 'culture' have on employees? Does she care?

Telstra keep their employees in a constant state of insecurity through fear of job loss. The performance regime is a forced ranking process designed to constantly turn over the workforce 'get em in, burn em out, get em out.'

It is a morale sapping process and it brings about an unintended consequence for Telstra

Telstra may control the companies 'branding' within Telstra and through sweeps of social networking sites looking for any employee negativity and dealing with it through disciplining or dismissing the employee but they cannot control it all. What does Ms. Grant think employees say to their families and friends about Telstra? What does she think they say to their broader community and social networks? Does she think others cannot see what Telstra employees are subjected to?

Ms Grant has encouraged staff to be frank in their responses to the questionnaire, many Telstra employees will naturally be reluctant to do so, they have seen before now what kind of reaction such frankness brings. It is not all that long ago it was Telstra's culture and written advice to managers that "if staff won't cooperate then you just shoot 'em and get them out of the way." I am sure Telstra will regard it as very churlish to raise these comments of former Trujillo wingman Greg Winn but it is indicative of the heart of the problem in Telstra. Culture is not created at the bottom, it should be, but it's not. A terrible culture has been enforced in Telstra from the top. That culture has percolated down and out of the company it affects everyone connected with Telstra and I doubt it can be turned around now through another frivolous survey that is widely regarded as a joke and rightly so. Shareholders should be very afraid!

Val Butler Organiser 0408 766 444

Authorised Joan Doyle Branch Secretary

Life Membership

CEPU Communications Division

LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARDED TO STAN HEWETT

At the December 2010 Divisional Executive, Stan who has been a member of the union for over 50 years was awarded life membership.

Stan has been in the union from when he was a telegraph boy to when he retired from Telstra as a cable assigner – and was a very dedicated and hard working shop steward.

Thanks, Stan.



Joan Doyle

Branch Secretary

Website: www.cwuvic.asn.au
Email: cdptvic@cepu.asn.au

200 Arden Street
North Melbourne
Victoria 3051
Ph: 03 9600 9100
Fax: 03 9600 9133