

How the Australia Post Grinch is changing your Christmas Authorised Holiday

Members would be well aware of Australia Post's long-held desire to substitute the Authorised Holiday that has traditionally occurred during the Christmas and New Year period, with an additional Annual Recreation Leave (ARL) day credit. Their proposal was first flagged as an employer claim during bargaining for EBA8 – and again during EBA9 talks. On both occasions, members made it absolutely clear that changes to the holiday through the EBA would not be supported.

This year has been no different with their desire intensifying during recent discussions to change the day from the Christmas Period to all employees having this day added to as an additional day to their annual leave balances.

Legislation

The Australia Post Authorised Holiday is provided for under a Principal Determination made under the Australian Postal Corporation Act.

By and large, the annual date nominated by Australia Post has occurred during the Christmas/New Year break, following Christmas Day – a period which has traditionally been one of the company's most quiet, operationally.

However, in pursuit of their wishes to alter the timing of the Authorised Holiday, Australia Post management presented their legal advice to the Union which asserted their ability to solely nominate the date within the year for it to occur. Our legal advice has confirmed that this is the case, however the date must be set as an Authorised Holiday – not as an additional annual leave day. Nevertheless, legally, Australia Post, playing grinch, have the ability to unilaterally make this change without requiring agreement with your Union.

What has changed

Post continues to claim a significant shift in customer expectations and demands due to online shopping trends. They claim what was once one of their most quiet operational periods has now become one of their busiest and continues to seek changes to the traditional timing of the holiday to accommodate their requirements.

Talks have continued

Australia Post has continued to seek to replace the holiday with an additional day of accumulated ARL through ongoing discussions involving all national and state branch leadership teams.

We have repeatedly opposed this change due to clear feedback that members do not support it and that our legal advice is clear that the Authorised Holiday must be a set day, not credited as additional leave.

However, given Australia Post's determination to implement this change, the Union has suggested an

alternative – for the holiday to continue to occur on a set day, a Monday or Friday.

Despite this meaning it will not occur during the Christmas/New Year period, it still allows members to continue to enjoy an additional long-weekend throughout the year.

What happens now?

The Union's alternative proposal has been accepted by Australia Post and the holiday will occur on a Friday, yet to be announced.

However, members will have the opportunity to elect in advance to work on the holiday and have the time added to their ARL accumulation, or to take an alternative day off.

Australia Post will be writing to you and undertaking briefings in your workplace to ask for your preference.

Union position

Our position has not changed – we do not believe the change is fair, or warranted. We believe the traditional timing of the holiday provides an opportunity for additional time with loved ones at an important time of the year where leave blackouts usually exist for operational employees.

Therefore, we will be surveying members on the change in the lead up to EBA10 talks later this year and will be guided by your views as we prepare your claims for bargaining with Australia Post – including asking what action members may be willing to participate in to advance their claims around this change.

However and in the meantime, given Australia Post's determination to proceed with their changes and their authority under legislation to nominate any calendar date for the holiday to occur, the Union's agreed proposal, described above, provides the best possible outcome for members to continue to be recognised with an additional long-weekend throughout the year.

We are well aware that the date Australia Post eventually nominates may not be beneficial to all members. In that scenario, should a different date suit your personal needs, or should you prefer to have the additional ARL day credited to your leave accrual instead, your Union suggests that members should exercise that option early.

Yours faithfully,



Nick Townsend
Branch Secretary

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