

14% - That's The Benchmark



News broke late yesterday of the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee deciding against Australia Post's requests to keep the salaries of CEO Ahmed Fahour and his executive group confidential.

The Corporation argued in correspondence to the Senate Committee that there was "no public interest" in disclosing the information. The Committee disagreed and published the information and the amount of reporting generated in today's news, along with the public's outraged response, says otherwise.

The attempt to hide the information from workers and the public was disgraceful. Mr Fahour is the highest paid public servant in the country and the public, along with Australia Post workers who are currently negotiating their own wage agreement, have a right to know – particularly where Australia Post continues to claim that CWU/CEPU members are subject to the Federal Government's workplace bargaining policy, which caps wage rises at 2% and places significant restrictions on improvements to conditions - despite their continued failure to share this with the workforce.

Late last year, as EBA9 negotiations wound up, we reported to you that the combined increase in the executive remuneration pool was 35% - but that it wasn't clear what portion of that was attributable to the CEO. This was due to the breakdowns, for the first time, not being disclosed in the annual report.

However, we also reported that contract level management were subjected to pay increases averaging the 2% mark as of late last year – lending further credibility to Post's claims of being subjected to the government policy.

We now know Mr Fahour's remuneration has increased from \$4.8 million to \$5.6 million – a whopping 14%. That's an \$800,000 increase – equal to 16 base-grade postal worker salaries.

Chairman weighs in

Australia Post Chairman, John Stanhope, weighed in telling ABC Radio: *"it's a very competitive business and we need to pay competitive salaries."*

This is absolutely true. Every CWU/CEPU member across the country would be well aware of the continuing decline in letters, the effect of that decline to the Corporation's bottom line last year and the fact that parcels are not a reserved service but subject to significant and vigorous competition. Our members acknowledge parcels being a key factor to keeping Australia Post alive well into the future.

We all understand this. In fact, our members have shown restraint and continue to adapt to change, after change, after change to ensure the Corporation is successful in transforming itself in to a sustainable business – even when they don't agree that the right change is being contemplated. They've asked for nothing more along the way, other than a fair go through genuine and meaningful consultation. After all, a sustainable Australia Post means sustainable jobs for postal workers.

But they're sick of the cry poor approach and the double standards when it comes to their conditions.

Shameful penny pinching on superannuation benefits, the attempts to change shift rostering arrangements to avoid paying penalty rates, the continued abuse of part-time, casual and fixed-term employment, the ongoing expectation for workers to engage in unpaid overtime, the dodgy contracting arrangements, shonky workers' compensation processes, abuse of the disciplinary process, inadequate relief arrangements, unsafe work practices and workplaces – they're sick of it.

And to top it all off, our members continue to cop the brunt of the public's onslaught against service failures that are the direct result of failed processes and bad decisions outside of their control.

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The Prime Minister and the Chairman are right

Talking to the media in relation to the CEO's salary, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull explained:

"The Australia Post Board is independent, it makes its own commercial decisions, this is not a decision of the government."

Continuing his defense of the executive group's remuneration on ABC Radio this morning, Mr Stanhope explained:

"It is a Government Business Enterprise, that is true, but it isn't actually taxpayer funded, it's self-funded, so it generates profit and generates its own cash."

Both of these statements are spot on – and exactly what your Union has been telling Mr Fahour and his executives every time the Federal Government's wage policy has reared its ugly head.

Our members will simply not accept that one set of rules applies to the executive group, while another set of rules applies to everybody else. If these are good enough reasons to justify the ability for Australia Post to pay these exorbitant salaries to Mr Fahour and his executive group, then it should be good enough to justify the ability to do the right thing and reward workers with a fair wage rise that recognises the increased cost of living and housing, but also their ongoing contribution to the Corporation's turnaround and outlook.

The state of bargaining

Other than one short meeting between Mr Fahour and your National and State CWU/CEPU leadership team, where the CEO reiterated the constraints of the government policy, formal bargaining has not yet recommenced since it wrapped up just before Christmas last year.

It's time to knuckle down and get this EBA9 done.

It's time for Australia Post to be honest and upfront with their bargaining position – they should come out of the long grass and explain it, in terms of both wages and conditions to their workforce.

Where to from here?

Your Union's Executive will shortly vote on the endorsement of the draft claims discussion document that was shared with members late last year. If you haven't seen it, you can view and download a copy at the EBA9 campaign website: www.eba9.com.au

We need to get back to the table and get the deal done. CWU/CEPU members have shown enough patience and restraint. Postal workers who take pride in their work deserve a new, fair EBA9.

And in light of what has been discovered today, Mr Fahour and his executive group have a unique opportunity to stand up, grow a spine and earn back the respect of their workforce.

At the end of the day, if they believe what they're taking home is fair, then so be it. But at the same time, let's see some of that fairness flow back to the workforce.

Earn back the respect today, Mr Fahour. Pick up the phone and signal your intention to deliver CWU/CEPU members with a new, fair EBA9 that delivers on job security, safety at work, fair pay, secure superannuation and allows our members to get on with the job of providing better services to their communities.

In the absence of any such signal, the Union will begin consulting with members on the reasons why they should prepare to engage in a significant public campaign, including potential industrial action, to advance their claims in pursuit of such an agreement.

Yours faithfully,



Nick Townsend
BRANCH SECRETARY