



Telstra Wideband restructure: discussions continue

Monday May 8, 2017

The CWU will meet again with Telstra today, Monday 8 May, over banding issues arising out of the restructuring of its Wideband business.

In March, Telstra announced a move which involved centralisation of Wideband design functions into three east coast centres, together with outsourcing of what the company describes as lower level design functions.

The restructure also involved a reorganisation of work functions and a change to the levels at which certain roles are classified, particularly those of designer and appraiser.



In both cases, the range of tasks performed in these roles has been expanded while at the same time the role has been reclassified at a lower level than is indicated by the current Job Descriptions.

As the Job Descriptions form part of the current Enterprise Agreement, the CWU is disputing Telstra's move and will, if necessary, pursue the question in the Fair Work Commission. Obviously, however, it would be preferable if an agreement can be reached on these issues.

The union is continuing to meet with affected members to build up a detailed case about the nature of the work they are performing now and that they will be required to perform under the new structure.

Members should also be aware that although Telstra has announced it will proceed with the restructure, this does not prevent the union pursuing the matter legally and, if successful, getting the positions which are in dispute reclassified at what we regard as their proper level.

CWU meets with Optus on job cuts

Optus has announced that it will cut 314 jobs from across its business units, with about half the losses coming from the managerial levels. The company says the cuts are a response to competitive pressures from low cost operators in both the fixed broadband and mobile markets.



The CWU met with Optus on Thursday 4 May to discuss the move which will see a significant number of customer service and IT jobs sent offshore. Altogether, roughly a quarter of the job losses will be through offshoring.

At the same time, 140 new positions are being created. However, while Optus says it will encourage redeployment where possible, it is not clear how many of these new jobs will actually represent practical opportunities for employees

CWU meets with Optus on job cuts (cont)

facing redundancy.

The CWU encourages members affected by these cuts and wanting to remain in Optus to contact their state branch to discuss options for redeployment. Where employees have readily transferable skills, there is always a strong argument for their retention within the company.

Telstra Wholesale redundancies

Telstra has notified the CWU that it intends to cut a total of 24 positions from Wholesale Customer Operations. The employees affected are based in Sydney and Brisbane.

Telstra says that the move is a response to a decline in transactions over its fixed network – a trend which can of course only increase as fixed line services migrate to the NBN.

However, the losses also reflect Telstra's decision to deal with the increased variability of customer demands in the NBN environment by transferring certain Wholesale work to an "industry partner". All provisioning order issue and error correction will be outsourced.

The CWU met with Telstra over this decision on 3 May. We confirmed that Telstra will seek volunteers for these redundancies and that it will actively assist in redeployment of those who wish to stay with the company.

Members should be aware that employees facing redundancy as a result of the NBN project should be candidates for retraining under Telstra's current NBN agreement with the Commonwealth. Any members wishing to undertake such training and encountering difficulties should contact their state branch.

Broadcast Australia: EA negotiations to begin

Broadcast Australia has formally notified the CWU that it wishes to commence bargaining for a new Enterprise Agreement (EA).

The current EA, negotiated and approved in 2013, reaches its nominal expiry date on 30 June, so it is well and truly time for new negotiations to begin. A first meeting has been scheduled for Thursday 11 May.

The CWU has begun contacting members with a view to identifying issues that employees want addressed during bargaining. Any members who have not yet had a chance to be involved with this process should contact their state branch or Dave Smithwick in the Divisional Office.

CWU members are reminded that they are automatically represented by their union during bargaining unless they actively choose not to be. There is no need to take any other formal steps in order to be part of the process.



Silcar Communications: EA update

As reported in E-bulletin # 6, a meeting to try to finalise negotiations for a new Enterprise Agreement (EA) in Silcar Communications was scheduled for 27 April.



Unfortunately, the meeting had to be cancelled at short notice. It will now take place on Wednesday 10 May.

While it is unlikely that the parties will reach full agreement on all the items under negotiation, it can be expected that Silcar will put the agreement out for a vote once these scheduled discussions have taken place.

ACMA EA: "no progress" report

The bargaining stalemate continues at the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) despite further EA negotiation meetings.

The CWU and other ACMA unions met with the ACMA representatives on Wednesday 3 May but management continued to refuse to move from its position regarding certain clauses which it insists must be either diluted or removed from the current Agreement.

Many of these clauses relate to workplace culture and safety, including provision of amenities, responsibility for preventing bullying and harassment and conduct of performance management.



Others have a specific monetary value, such as the payment of travel allowance for part-day travel or the payment of increments to staff employed on non-ongoing contracts.

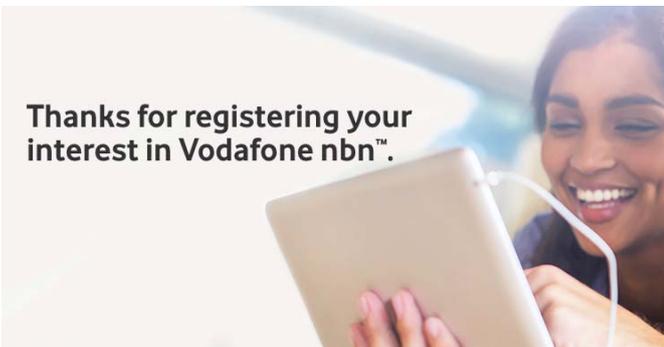
The unions believe that federal government policy does not require ACMA to adopt the slash-and-burn approach it is displaying in relation to current EA provisions in such areas. It seems however that ACMA wants a bare-bones EA to the greatest extent possible.

This is not an approach which seems likely to attract the support of ACMA employees - who have already rejected such proposed EAs twice - any time in the near future.

Vodafone's fixed broadband play

Vodafone has called for expressions of interest from customers wanting an alternative to the current NBN Retail Service Providers (RSPs) as it prepares to enter the fixed broadband market.

As the most recent report by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) on the NBN market showed, four RSPs currently account for some 94% of all wholesale services purchased from nbn, so the pickings available to Vodafone would seem to be lean indeed.



But according to Vodafone, there are many dissatisfied customers out there and the company is clearly hoping that a targeted approach could produce results.

According to Vodafone Managing Director of Fixed Networks, Mathew Lobb, "many consumers have told us that they are unhappy with their existing fixed broadband provider. They are frustrated by the poor connection experience, confused about their options, and when things go wrong they feel they are left in the lurch."

Well yes, but whether Vodafone, a newcomer to the local wireline world despite operating for nearly 25 years in the Australian market, can do better than the current RSPs is surely a moot point.

The fact is that many of the problems currently being experienced by NBN-based customers spring from the nature of the project itself – from structural separation which decouples service providers from the infrastructure owner (whose fault is the fault?); from lack of forward planning and training in relation to labour supply ("poor connection experience") and from poor levels of community understanding about what the (near) monopoly model means for them ("confused about the options").

A recent survey, for instance, revealed that 8 years after the project was launched over half of those questioned did not understand that they would have to switch to the NBN if they wanted a fixed wireline service!

How many of these will turn to Vodafone as their hour of need approaches remains to be seen.

Telstra increases NBN market share

Telstra continues to lead the pack in relation to NBN-based customers – and by a solid margin.

The latest figures released by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in its NBN wholesale market report show Telstra accounting for just under half (49.8%) of all wholesale services acquired from nbn to date.

Second was TPG, with 23.7%, then Optus at 12.8% and Vocus at 7.5%.

So much for the NBN as a mechanism for reducing Telstra's "dominance" in the telecommunications market.

It seems unlikely that this picture is going to change dramatically in the short to medium term.



Telstra increases NBN market share (cont)

Indeed, as the metropolitan sections of the NBN come into greater play, Telstra is likely to enjoy even greater advantages of scale in terms of its ability to advertise, connect and support NBN-based services.

Meanwhile, customers continue to gravitate towards lower bandwidth packages, with over 55% of all services acquired being at the 25/5 Mbps speed tier.

ACTU turns 90

On 3 May, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) marked its 90th anniversary.

The ACTU is the peak body of the Australian trade union movement and since its founding in 1927 has supported, coordinated and led the many campaigns which have transformed working life in Australia since that time.

All modern leave entitlements were won, established and expanded because of struggles of the Australian union movement.

The same goes for:

- The right to equal pay for women;
- The 40 hour week;
- Compulsory superannuation;
- Medicare;
- Paid parental leave;
- Safety standards in workplaces across the country; and
- Countless other conditions which have fundamentally improved the lives of working people.



Today the ACTU's work continues with campaigns and cases being run to establish a leave entitlement for people affected by domestic violence, a significant increase in the minimum wage and to protect penalty rates for some of the lowest paid workers in Australia.

ACTU Secretary Sally MacManus said that the Australian trade union movement had been, and continued to be, the greatest force for change working people had for improving their lives, the lives of their families and their communities."

"We are proud of our achievements," she said. "We will fight to defend them and we will lead our movement to give working people stronger and better rights at work."

Keep in touch

Keep in touch

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If you have any questions on any of the above articles, please contact an official at the Union office on (08) 8443 7389.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G Lorrain', positioned above the typed name.

Graham Lorrain
Branch President
CWU SA/NT