

St Asaph posties take a stand on intimidation over cut-ups

Some posties at Christchurch's St Asaph Delivery Branch have been exercising their right to not participate in cut-ups which they believe were in breach of the Collective Employment Agreement. Using their individual "round summary sheets" the posties could see clearly that the mail volumes were above rostered hours mail volumes for those days.

The requirement to perform cut-ups would also have been in breach of Post's own cut-ups policy. In a memo to PWUA advocate Graeme Clarke on 29 March, Delivery General Manager Matt Riordan states:

"In principle cut-ups should not

be required where workloads are over rostered hours and there are people that can be called in to cover the round".

Clause N12 page 81 of the CEA states: *"Best endeavours will be made to ensure appropriate resources are available and used to meet daily requirements."*

On 9 April mail was in excess of rostered hours mail volume and the management had refused to use "best endeavours" to call on extra staff to avoid a cut-up.

On the first occasion in March when the posties required that the company comply with the Collective Employment Agreement in respect of cut-ups the management quickly provided the extra staff to avoid a cut-up.

A few days later local manager Duncan Burman called a meeting with the PWUA delegates and at that meeting stated, in clear breach of the CEA and the General Manager's memo, that Post had the right to have cut-ups whenever they like, for whatever reason they like, and as often as they like and posties have no right to refuse the cut-ups.

On the second occasion letters were issued to the posties alleging that their non-performance of a cut-up on 9 April

amounted to misconduct and required them to attend disciplinary meetings.

Following advice from their union advocate and union organiser the PWUA posties declined to attend the disciplinary meeting as the matter was not "misconduct" by the posties, but a breach of the CEA by the employer.

In an apparent attempt to further intimidate them the posties were then issued with letters saying that failure to attend the disciplinary meetings could bring further disciplinary action and a decision on their first "misconduct" could be taken in their absence.

To protect the PWUA members from the management's intimidation, the PWUA immediately filed an urgent case against Post in the Employment Relations Authority for breaching the Collective Employment Agreement.

The next step in the process is an attempt to reach agreement in the Mediation Service of the Department of Labour before the end of this month. (This process is set out in section J on page 57 of the Collective Employment Agreement.)

In the meantime the St Asaph posties expect to hear nothing more about disciplinary action against them for simply insisting that the company comply with the provisions of the CEA.

Abusive customer gets a Court fine

Late last year a postie at Epsom Delivery in Auckland was verbally abused by a male customer as she delivered mail in his street.

Feeling threatened and unsafe, the postie reported the incident to the police. The police decided to prosecute the man, and the postie was summonsed to give evidence in the District Court.

Seven months after the incident the customer was found guilty of using obscene language and ordered to pay a fine, court costs and witness costs.

While the postie did not find the Court process easy she said she was determined to follow it through. She believes (and the union agrees) that posties should not have to put up with verbal abuse from customers when they are doing their job.

The postie was supported in Court by her partner (who is a PWUA delegate) and a PWUA Organiser.

Postie vacancies filled

Post is honouring its promise to consider filling postie vacancies on a case by case basis, and some permanent appointments have been made.

Posties are advised to contact their union office if they believe their branch does not have enough permanents.

Hamilton delivery manager in the dark on workers' rights for break times

To force posties to have their breaks at 8am, only one hour after starting work for the day, the management at the Hamilton Postal Delivery Branch turns off the lights in the sorting room.

Under clause N5 page 80, posties are required to take 15 minutes of their break time before starting delivery. Posties' start and finish times and break times are part of their roster arrangements as set out on page 18 the CEA.

In using a show of hands as a basis for forcing posties to take their break at 8am, the manager was in breach of the Roster Changes provisions in

clauses C7 to C9 of the CEA (pages 20 and 21) which set out the consultation process that the company must follow for any proposed roster changes - including making any changes to the timing of rest breaks.

In addition to the CEA, clause 69ZE of the Employment Relations Act provides for breaks to be taken at times agreed between each employee and their manager.

If agreement cannot be reached then the breaks must be timed so that the working day is divided into roughly equal periods of work.

Auckland postie delegates losing confidence in round measuring process

Auckland delivery delegates have concerns that the company's recent round re-measuring processes are likely to lead to wrongly sized rounds and all the work the posties are actually doing is not being properly recognised.

After the PWUA raised the issue with Post in 2007 the company issued a written procedure to be followed by managers when delivery Round Profiles are being reviewed.

The procedure stipulates that the person or persons who check the accuracy of each Round Profile are "to be selected on the basis of having adequate knowledge of the round(s)" and "to be selected with input from both Posties and Union Delegates to ensure that they have the broad support of Branch Posties".

However, in spite of these written assurances, delegates have reported that in recent months rounds have been signed off as accurate by people who have no knowledge of the round, and who have been selected without

any input from posties or union delegates. This is in breach of Post's 2007 measuring process document.

As a result many posties are not confident that the round information stored in the company's Work Measurement System is accurate.

The posties' lack of confidence is compounded by the Round Measurers' common practice of measuring rounds by themselves, and not accompanying the postie delivering the round. To get accurate measurements the round measurer should follow the postie exactly - for example for a walking postie this means running the wheel at the heel of the postie.

Posties understandably lose confidence in round sizing when the rounds are:

- (a) being measured by someone who doesn't know the round, and
- (b) being checked for accuracy by someone who also doesn't know the round.

(See also the story below).

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Meeting with the boss?

Members are again strongly advised not to attend meetings with team leaders or managers without a union representative being present.

If a union representative is not immediately available, the member can request the management to postpone the meeting to a mutually agreeable time which allows the member to be accompanied by a union representative.

Post makes commitment to provide written "standard procedures" for WMS

At the six-monthly PWUA/Post National Meeting in March Post agreed to produce a single document containing a detailed account of the whole of the Work Measurement System (WMS). The resulting document would be provided to unions, with a brief summary document for general distribution to posties. (Until now, WMS details have not all been recorded in one document.)

The union also asked Post to make a number of other commitments regarding the delivery WMS. The company acknowledged that, since it

is working towards a pay system for posties based on the WMS, these matters would be regarded as important by posties.

Post also said it would work with the PWUA to finalise an "exceptions to the rule" list, to deal with circumstances that are not covered in the current WMS. (For example how to measure the work content of delivering to large banks of letterboxes in apartment buildings.)

Post also committed to producing a written "standard operating procedure" for conducting a recast of delivery rounds. The PWUA pointed out that

Post had produced a partial "standard operating procedure" before in relation to reviewing round profiles, but the company had failed to follow it (see story above).

Although Post did not agree to provide a "trouble shooter's guide to WMS problems", the company would "reflect on it". The union argued that it was important for posties to know what they could do if they thought their round measurement was wrong, but Post said it was worried about the big workload for the company of posties identifying problems on their rounds.

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POSTAL WORKERS UNION OF AOTEAROA (NORTHERN)
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I hereby appoint the Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa incorporated to be my authorised representative under Sections 18 and 236 of the Employment Relations Act 2000. For the purpose of this authority any duly appointed representative of the PWUA is empowered to act on my behalf in any matters related to or arising out of the negotiation and application of any Employment Agreement or any other matter relating to my employment at my request. This authority shall continue in force until revoked by myself, giving two weeks notice.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signed

Date Appointment No.

Employer

Branch

Home Address

..... Home Phone

Deduction Authority for Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa (Northern)

I authorise my employer to deduct:

\$4.39 per week when I am employed for 30 or more hours per week, or

\$2.20 per week when I am on-call, or employed for less than 30 hours per week from my pay and credit the Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa Northern District.

Please stop any other deductions from my pay to any other union.