

PWUA voting proposal supports EPMU members

How a "no" vote could get a better wage deal

A majority "no" vote from the members of both unions during the current round of ratification meetings would have the potential to dramatically improve the bargaining power of both unions.

Up to now Post has been able to "divide and rule" by running two completely separate sets of CEA negotiations.

However a "no" ratification vote from both unions would, provided the two unions re-entered bargaining together, remove the significant bargaining advantage enjoyed by Post.

The PWUA believes Post would be very unlikely to take their current offers off the table because after 30 June it would be legal for members of both unions to consider taking industrial action.

This year's CEA negotiations have shown once again that two unions bargaining separately with Post were in

a weakened bargaining position and faced a very difficult task trying to maintain and improve wages and conditions.

Although the PWUA and EPMU separately found it impossible to get any improvement in Post's wage offer both unions were able to protect mail centre workers from serious clawbacks.

If both unions voted "no" then negotiations would resume to try and reach an improved settlement from a significantly stronger bargaining position.

To support EPMU members the PWUA is giving its members more than two options. The PWUA is recommending a conditional "no" vote - "no" on the condition that EPMU members also return a "no" vote.

Neither the EPMU nor the PWUA would be able to make any progress on Post's low wage offer without the support of the other union.

Support grows for PWUA and EPMU cooperation

The PWUA is aware of strong support amongst the members of both the PWUA and EPMU for a better wage offer from Post in this year's wage negotiations.

The \$500 and 1% offer is seen as slipping further behind the cost of living.

The determination of both EPMU and

PWUA members at the workplace level to bargain together at wage negotiations has also steadily strengthened.

The PWUA awaits a response from the EPMU advocate so that a process to identify and work through any obstacles to joint union negotiations can be set up.

Low wage offer linked to Government pressure on Post to maintain dividend flow

Government pressure on state owned companies to maintain their dividend flows to the state is a factor in the low wage offer by Post in this year's wage negotiations.

The statement above made by PWUA advocate Graeme Clarke during wage bargaining earlier this month was not denied by Post's negotiating team.

Dividend returns to the Government as Post's shareholder can be improved by cost cutting - and holding wage increases as low as possible.

State Owned Enterprises Minister Tony Ryall wrote to Post's board in December 2011 outlining the "2012/2013 Shareholder Expectation of SOEs". In the "Return to the Shareholder" section he wrote: "We expect improved results ...".

The PWUA understands the pressure SOE board members feel under to comply with the demands of Government Ministers. Members of the board of ACC for example were dumped by the then ACC Minister Nick Smith for not moving enough in the direction required by the Government.

The PWUA believes that the "top down" pressure from the Government demanding improved profits and dividends from SOEs like Post must be balanced by "bottom up" resistance from the unions and its members.

The alternative is that a bigger proportion of the dividend stream to the Government next year will have come from the pay packets of employees in this year's wage settlement.

Counting the ratification votes

Most PWUA members will know the result of their own worksite ratification vote before the final vote is counted.

To ensure total confidence in the process and counting of the votes, the PWUA encourages its members at each worksite to count the votes themselves.

At the end of the ratification meeting the delegate can ask for one or two of the members present to be scrutineers and count the secret ballots. These numbers are recorded by the PWUA organiser who then takes the ballot papers away to be added to the final total.

The union office compiles a register of the votes from each site which can be checked at the end of balloting by any union member.

Some worksites - especially small worksites - may prefer not to have their votes counted at the end of the meeting to ensure the secrecy of the ballot amongst a small number of members.

Postal votes and votes from small sites are not identified by worksite.

The final total is expected to be available mid July.

Post makes mail room savings

Both the PWUA and EPMU were concerned about the effect on union members of Post's claim to cut both the night rate in mail centres and also the removal of the 30 minute paid meal break.

However during the wage negotiations the PWUA pointed out to Post that the company's plan for the restructuring of shift hours in the mail centres would already provide Post with significant savings from a reduction in the number of workers entitled to the night rate.

Post was also well aware of the strong resistance amongst mail room workers to the potential loss of earnings.

Single-sided Redback

As the third of a series of CEA Special Issues, this issue of Redback is printed on one side only.

