

Wednesday 30 August, 2017

Bargaining system is broken: Murdoch kicks workers off their agreement

Murdoch University has become the latest employer to betray its workforce by unilaterally cancelling a workplace agreement which covers 3000 staff – throwing their pay and conditions into uncertainty.

The Fair Work Commission this afternoon approved Murdoch's request to cancel an agreement part way through bargaining in a move which now forces the workers and their union to try to recover the lost ground in a new agreement.

If left without a new agreement the workers will have their pay and conditions stripped right back to the safety net of the award. In granting Murdoch's application to terminate the current agreement, Commissioner Williams acknowledged that the cancellation would, "change the context of bargaining, more to Murdoch's favour".

The system is broken when agreements previously voted on and approved by both sides can be torn up by the employer to gain a massive advantage in negotiations for a new agreement. The use of this tactic by employers to blackmail workers has increased exponentially and is driving wages down when Australia needs a pay rise.

In the last three years over 850 agreements have been terminated impacting approximately 120,000 workers. Most recently the Streets ice cream company has applied to cancel its workplace agreement in a move that would cut worker's pay by 46 per cent.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"This is the latest in a very long list of companies which have exploited this incredibly destructive precedent set by the Aurizon case at Fair Work. We need immediate action to stop companies completely bypassing the normal bargaining process and reaching for this nuclear option."

"Murdoch University is a public institution which has spent \$2.8 million taking legal action against the unions that represent its own workforce in order to get its own way in bargaining. This is absolutely appalling behaviour by an employer and an improper use of public money."

"The bargaining system is broken and the Turnbull Government is doing nothing to help working Australians. We need action now to protect jobs and wages."

"We need to change the rules so that they are not used by employers to blackmail workers into accepting lower pay and job security."

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