

CHANCE FOR A NEW BEGINNING AT TELSTRA

BULLETIN 2

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First Negotiations

Negotiations commenced on Thursday 15 May for a new Enterprise Agreement at Telstra.

These negotiations come at a critical time for the telecommunications industry. Proposals for the National Broadband Network are due by July 25. If successful in its bid, Telstra and its skilled employees could play a critical role in our nation's future economic competitiveness, and this will ensure a critical revenue stream for the future of the company.

It will also be the first negotiations since the election of a Labor government, and the rejection by the Australian people of the Howard government's WorkChoices regime. From our point of view, this marks the start of a new era. Employers, unions and government must take the opportunity to work together for the common good.

These are very important negotiations for all Telstra employees, whether directly affected, or on a current or expired individual agreements. These negotiations will set the standard for all future deals, and unions will vigorously pursue the ability of all staff to access the benefits and protections of the Enterprise Agreement.

The Telstra unions, APESMA, CEPU and CPSU, are currently consulting with members and interested staff. Please look out for your opportunities to provide your contribution through surveys, meetings or direct consultation.

Our Approach

The union negotiating team today focussed on the key principles underlying our approach:

- good secure jobs for a skilled workforce who deliver important services to the community
- protection of current conditions including the redundancy agreement
- a fair balance between work commitments and family and community life
- a workplace where employees get a genuine say about decisions that affect them
- decent pay rises that keep pace with the cost of living and also recognises the contribution of staff
- fair and equitable performance management arrangements
- the right to join and be represented by a union, and access to effective conciliation and arbitration.

Telstra management outlined a vision of the future that emphasised a high skill, high performing workforce. Unions welcomed this approach, and we look forward to building the principles that can underpin this approach. Union negotiators stressed the desire to move past adversarial relationships to a relationship that focuses on common interests and common goals.

Telstra initially rejects ACTU assistance

Because of the importance of this negotiation, APESMA, CEPU and the CPSU have invited the ACTU to spearhead our efforts. ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence personally offered to attend Thursday's meeting with Telstra managers to provide input and guidance – an offer that, remarkably, Telstra's HR managers rejected.

The ACTU represents 2 million Australian workers and their families. The Your Rights at Work campaign, including marginal seat activity, TV ads and community advocacy played a pivotal role in the election of the Rudd Labor government.

The feedback from members has been overwhelming -- they strongly welcome ACTU involvement. The ACTU will play an ongoing role in the campaign and ensure worker and consumer interests are heard. We are confident senior management will welcome the influence and assistance ACTU can provide.

Next Steps

The unions will meet with Telstra a number of times over the next two weeks to set the groundwork for the new Agreement.

What you can do:

If you are already a union member, thanks for your support. Please help by talking about your unions' EBA campaign with your workmates

If you are not yet a member, please join today and help win some real improvements in Telstra. The more members of your union, the better agreement you will get.

If you are a member already, why not ask a colleague to join? Every member makes a successful outcome more likely.

