

Hello everyone,

Last Thursday's (12.5.11) circular from the MEAA regarding the new collective agreement has prompted questions from staff.

While I greatly appreciate and encourage dialogue with staff on this agreement process, it's disappointing that you have not been given completely accurate information during a week when you're expected to state a position.

With that in mind and to allow staff to make clear and confident assessments of all options tabled I trust the following is useful:

1. Pay Rise

What the MEAA reported: *"We have seen recent industry pay rises of 4%, 3.5% and 3% at News Ltd metro papers, and 3.5%, 3% and 2.5% plus 0.5% at the ABC. CPI is currently tracking at 3.3. We propose pay rises of 4.5% per annum to reflect the rising cost of living and your increased productivity. Management says you deserve 2.75%, 3% and 2.5%."*

Not once during discussions did we cast a mean-spirited undertone to our proposals as implied above nor did we say you "deserve" this or that. The fact is we countered the MEAA's opening base salary position with an offer reflecting projected inflation figures and in consideration of numerous difficult challenges facing our industry, our customers and AAP.

2. Progression

What the MEAA reported: *"The company wants to remove the ability for staff to progress automatically past Grade 2. Is this fair?"*

The fact is we have tabled a proposal to stop automatic progression at Grade 2b (not Grade 2). We also explained that this would provide the capacity to upgrade more staff more often based on merit but the MEAA omitted this information.

3. Overnight Shifts

What the MEAA reported: *"The company wants to reduce pay rates for overnight staff on permanent sole or partial overnight shifts."*

For context, this clause affects four people (of course not making this less significant for those four people). It was tabled by AAP with the aim of smoothing out a challenging administration process.

4. Casual shifts

What the MEAA reported: *"Currently casuals get overtime if they work longer than 7.5 hours. The company wants them to be able to work up to 8.5 hours reflecting roster patterns in certain areas before overtime provisions kick in. They say this is to bring casual shifts in line with permanent rosters. This would be a loss of 30% for any casuals who worked this extra hour. The company stated that casuals do not currently do overtime and that this provision would result in more work for them. Is this fair? Are you a casual who works overtime?"*

There is no loss to anyone because we do not roster casual staff on subbing desks for any longer than 7.5 hours and do not intend to under existing terms. Therefore we are not taking anything away. The rationale behind this proposal is to provide the wherewithal to roster casual subeditors on for an extra hour and pay them for that extra hour.

5. Cabcharge provisions

What the MEAA reported: *"The company has stated that they do not wish to change Cabcharge provisions."*

The fact is we invited the negotiating party to submit a proposal for us to consider and it has not yet done so.

6. EBA or policies

What the MEAA reported: *"The company wants to detail a number of issues in policy documents rather than the agreement. Our concern is that policies can be easily changed without any notice to staff. Did you know that the current parental policy does not apply to staff on AWAs or the collective agreement?"*

To clarify:

The current EBA allows for six weeks paid **maternity** leave

The AAP AWAs provide for eight weeks paid **parental** leave.

The AAP parental leave policy provides for six weeks **maternity** pay.

Regardless of any of the above all policies must comply with legislation.

7. Disputes, Consultation and Individual Flexibility

What the MEAA reported: *“The company wants to stick in the basic clauses found in the Fair Work Regulations. These clauses sound boring and tedious, but if they are not drafted properly they will affect the way the agreement operates and what options we have if we end up in a dispute.”*

The fact is we have tabled the government’s relevant Fair Work Model clauses word-for-word. We submit that the government has drafted them properly.

Exemptions

Also, I have had questions from people directly affected by our proposal to make all people in management roles exempt from the collective terms and conditions. No-one affected by this proposed exemption extension will lose any pay.

As always, I remain available to staff for questions or advice on any of the issues raised during the EBA negotiation process. Please don’t hesitate to contact me at any time.

Regards
Tony

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