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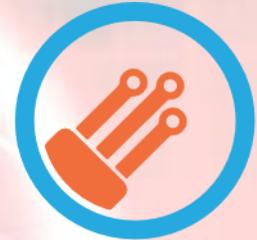
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Bargaining kicks off, clouded by shadow of imminent job cuts



EBA2021
connecting our future

Despite lockdowns across multiple states, bargaining commenced yesterday for a new Enterprise Agreement with Telstra. Limited mostly to establishing a framework for negotiations including frequency of meetings, Telstra also gave a presentation addressing the following:

Commitment on existing conditions

Telstra announced from the outset that while bargaining for a new agreement meant that all matters could be negotiated – they wanted to assure employees that the 36.75-hour week, sick leave entitlements of 15 days and the redundancy framework would be maintained as is regardless of how negotiations unfold.

The Union negotiating team supports this undertaking.

Multiple Agreements

Telstra detailed its proposal to negotiate four different EBAs – one for each of the areas proposed under their planned structural changes.

This will mean one Agreement for each of ServeCo, InfraCo Fixed, InfraCo Towers and Retail. When questioned on this, Telstra provided rationale that the four agreements would mean simplified agreements specific to each group. The Union bargaining team has not yet had time to consider this issue in any great depth but at this stage, our position remains that – we still prefer one agreement for the Telstra group workforce. The Union has asked Telstra to provide further information about the proposed scope of each agreement.

Voluntary flexibility options

Telstra has proposed changes to the Agreement that would allow employees to work more flexibly. Particularly, they're looking at allowing employees to enter in to split shift arrangements, working from home where possible, and working outside the ordinary span of hours.

Telstra claims these options will be entirely based upon agreement by the individual employee, who would be able to terminate at any time said agreement at any time and is also seeking to have the changes implemented through a variation to the Award. The Union is reserving its position on this until we have had an opportunity to properly scrutinise the proposal once further detail is revealed.

It was most disappointing to have to commence bargaining under the shadow of further T22 job cuts. It seems Telstra is back to business as usual, in stark contrast to some good moves made early on in the pandemic, including the temporary delay to cuts.

We've called on Telstra to reconsider going down this path, where the goodwill it earned with the right decisions made last year would be quickly erased by continuing to attack working families – particularly at a time where the two thirds of the country is in lockdown, under some of the harshest restrictions we've seen yet.

We will keep members updated as talks progress, with pay slated for discussions early in the process over the next few weeks. In the meantime, if you require any further information, please contact your State Branch Official Mark (Kiwi) Templeman on 0417 700 868.

Yours faithfully,

CAMERON BIRD
STATE SECRETARY

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