

Staff Negotiations for a Union Agreement

NEWS

A Rocky Start to Negotiations

Negotiations are under way with Mission Australia for a new Certified Agreement that will set **your working conditions** for the next three years. The first stage of negotiations was conducted over two days of last week – May 28th and May 29th. The negotiations were slow and in the opinion of your negotiators very little progress was made.

The first day and a half was taken up with the negotiators detailing the serious concern we have with the Mission Australia proposal. We have identified over **100 problems** with the proposal – **most of the issues identified are examples of Mission Australia attempting to cut your current conditions**. In addition we put our key demands on the table:

- No link between productivity and pay
- Pay increases at least in keeping with CPI
- No reduction in current conditions
- Increases in paid maternity leave

On the second afternoon Mission Australia began responding to the concerns raised. Some small progress was made. Many issues remain unresolved. This newsletter sets out the main concerns that remain.

We have established two working groups relevant to the Community Sector – one on CETSS and one on shift work. Our next negotiation session is in the week of June 30th.

Unity - Negotiators working as one

The Mission Australia Staff Negotiation Team and the ASU (including members and officials) have come together to protect and improve your working conditions.

This means that all Mission Australia workers who are to be covered by the new agreement are being represented in a seamless, coordinated, cooperative, organised and resourced way.

Your negotiating team is made up of workers from services from across Australia and Union officials with the skills and expertise to support and advise them. We are in a stronger position by all working together.

United we bargain. Divided we beg.

Introducing Your United Negotiating Team

Skye McDonald (NSW)
Eleanor d'Avaugour (NSW)
Peter Lacey (NSW)
Ian Murdoch (NT)
Sharon Terry (VIC)
Raylene Bartczak (QLD)
Jeremy Brennan (WA)
Helen Jackson (WA)
Avalon Sperring (SA)
Lee Edwards (NSW)
Michael Flinn (Assistant Secretary ASU NSW)
Jo Justo (National Industrial Officer ASU)

Workers and officials representing other areas of the Community Services are also participating when required.

Cutting Your Current Conditions...

Mission Australia's current proposal for your new CA would reduce your current conditions, or reduce Award entitlements or not meet National Standards in the following areas:

- Your right to be consulted when your employer is introducing change that would affect you
- The rights of a woman to request to return to part time work after maternity leave, and for an employer not to unreasonably withhold consent
- An attempt by Mission Australia to introduce a provision that would allow them to negotiate with individuals to remove any of the conditions of the CA.
- Removing your right to be provided with a letter of appointment setting out your role and your entitlements (like pay)
- Removing your right to be provided with a Job Description
- Averaging your hours of work over a year effectively making hour bank irrelevant and removing overtime payments
- Not properly providing for a dispute resolution clause that allows the Independent Umpire – the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to arbitrate disputes
- Moving a whole range of your entitlements like work locations, letters of offer, job descriptions, supervision etc. from the CA (a legal entitlement) to Mission Australia policy that can be changed at any time by Mission Australia
- Changing how casuals and temporary staff are employed and changing them in a way that would undermine ongoing and permanent employment at Mission Australia
- Demanding that you have a doctor's certificate every time you are off sick – currently you only need a certificate after two days
- The right to demand that you return from your annual leave if the employer wants you to

- No properly structured redundancy provisions – meaning that you could be given a lower job at a lower rate of pay without being paid compensation as required by the Award

This is clearly unacceptable. There can be no reductions in current conditions.

In addition to these concerns there are some other major issues that must be addressed in negotiations. Details are set out below.

Mission Australia refuses to take productivity pay increases off the table... for now

Mission Australia is taking a unique stand in the Australian community service sector – it is attempting to link pay to productivity improvements!!! Your negotiators have made their position on this clear:

- Productivity based wage increases are not appropriate in the Community Services Industry
- Productivity based wage increases have been rejected in the other two caring professions – nursing and teaching
- We will not agree to productivity based wage increases
- We need real pay increases with NO STRINGS ATTACHED
- We are more than willing to help Mission Australia be more productive but we will not accept a link between productivity and pay

It's time for Mission Australia to abandon this proposal and put up a better proposition.

Mission Australia's pay offer is just not good enough

Mission Australia's pay offer appears to be as follows:

In 2008 - 3.5% immediately plus an additional amount to keep you 1% above the NSW SACS Award rate

In 2009 – 3% plus 1% linked to productivity improvements
In 2010 – 3% plus 1% linked to productivity improvements

And, in 2009 and 2010 as an as “yet to be explained” additional pay increase for “high achievers”.

What do your negotiators say about this?

1. If we all went to the NSW Award rate (a rate that Mission Australia is using as its benchmark) we would get a 3.5% increase on July 1st with no strings attached.
2. In essence Mission Australia wants us to bargain away many, many conditions for a 1% pay increase above that to which we are entitled to.
3. In 2009 and 2010 the negotiators will not agree to a productivity linked pay increase – we need real increases with no strings attached. In addition we need a guarantee that we remain 1% above the NSW Award (or equivalent) rate of pay.
4. The negotiators look forward to seeing the detail of Mission Australia’s “higher rates for high achievers” proposal.

Shift workers, camps, penalties and related matters

During negotiations some progress was made on the principles that relate to how any new arrangements on shift penalties and payments for camps could be dealt with. Mission Australia agreed to our demand that the principle be that “no worker could be worse off”.

A working party has been established to work on this matter.

Where to Now?

The first couple of days of negotiations have shown we have a lot of work to do. So far we have really only been able to put positions about getting back what Mission has

attempted in their proposal to strip away. This is not the way to negotiate. You should not have to fight for what you already have!

The negotiating team is continuing to work to protect and improve your employment conditions. The next round of negotiations is set out for late June.

Your Team is not asking for much

Your Team is not being unreasonable or unrealistic in their expectations. We simply want;

- **To fix all the clauses that have fallen behind industry standards, including rates of pay.**
- **Pay increases and conditions that are equal or better than industry standard.**
- **The removal of all reference to performance pay and productivity based measures for pay increases.**
- **A cohesive Agreement that includes all conditions, ownership of your role and a real consultation process. Not policies and procedures that can be changed at any time.**
- **An Agreement that protects you from individual negotiations (like AWAs, ITEAs and individual flexibility clauses) that cut your rights, pay and conditions.**

The negotiating team is currently preparing a document for Mission Australia which outlines our position on all matters related to your wages and conditions.

The negotiating team has nominated people for working parties to address the specific concerns of workers being ‘captured’ for the first time into the agreement and for workers affected by shift work and related clauses and conditions.

What Can You Do?

Support your Negotiating Team by joining your Union. Your strength is in numbers and in working in partnership with the Union officers who have the resources, skills and experiences to support you.

Keep informed – if you want information contact the team negotiator from your state or your local Union office. Also check the website on a regular basis www.asu.org.au

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