

Telstra reforms: ACTU set to toss the toys

by James Riley

Friday, 09 October 2009

The ACTU has thrown broad support behind Rudd Government communications industry reform but has set down five conditions to make sure no telco worker is worse off under the new regime.



If Telstra is structurally separated, or if Telstra assets and employees are tipped into the National Broadband Network, the ACTU wants guarantees that not only the continued employment of existing workers, but that all accrued entitlements, as well as pre-existing pay and conditions are transferred as well.

The conditions present a challenge for an industry in transition, and where some foresee root and branch cultural changes as needed within some Telstra functional areas.

In its submission to the Senate inquiry into telecommunications regulatory changes, the ACTU said it recognised Government was committed to making the changes, "but we do urge them to ensure that, however where Telstra's workforce is affected, it is conducted

Featured Whitepaper

[5 Best Practices for Smartphone Support](#)

in a way that is transparent and fair, and that no employee is worse off."

The ACTU submission was made in conjunction with the three unions that primarily represent workers in the telco sector: the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU); the Community and Public Sector Union; and the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia (APESMA).

The unions want a part of the process, asking that Government consult with them about any changes.

"The ACTU accepts that changes to the structure of Telstra will be made, but we urge the Government to ensure that transparent and fair rules are set out for the division of the workforce across the wholesale and retail divide and that no employee is worse off under the new arrangements," they said.

Where structural separation of networks or assets is enforced and assets are transferred to a new company, the ACTU wants five conditions followed: That the new company is obliged to employ the workforce currently responsible that area of business; that the same employment conditions are applied; that the qualifying period for unfair dismissal under the new workplace rules are waived; all entitlements are transferred to the new company; that any policies at the new company related to employment conditions must ensure that no worker is worse off.

On proposed changes to the Trade Practices Act, the ACTU supports strong internal governance that enables better transparency for the regulator, and better equivalent access arrangements for access seekers.

"The ACCC has the appropriate knowledge and experience to regulate access to the services that telecommunications companies provide," it said.

"Whilst acknowledging this, we do note that any situation where broader powers are given to a regulator should be subject to close scrutiny and review to ensure the process is transparent and efficient."