

FSU Meets Gail Kelly

"...a great opportunity for our Union to put the important questions to those making the decisions about the merger..."



Construction workers deserve the same rights as all workers



FSU Bites



August

Newsletter of the Finance Sector Union of Australia, NSW/ACT Branch

Staff the key to IAG recovery

"I don't agree cutting large numbers of staff is a long term solution to the problem..."

IAG staff say the big insurer's approach to restructuring, following QBE's failed takeover bid, lacks credibility. IAG has announced a far reaching restructure of the business in the form of a recovery plan that will see 600 jobs cut from the organisation. This is widely seen as an attempt to bolster the share price in the wake of the board's rejection of QBE's takeover offer.

FSU Rep Ashley Ubrhien believes that cutting staff in the effort to prop up the share price is not the real solution to IAG's problems.

"I don't agree cutting large numbers of staff is a long term solution to the problem. The work still has to be done by those of us left behind and this just creates a different set of problems", he said.

"I believe the key to IAG's recovery is its staff. Many of us are very keen to work through the current changes but IAG haven't included us in the process", said Ashley.

"Decisions regarding staff numbers and job losses are being made at the top of the organisation without any consultation with the people who are actually doing the work", he said.

"Now is an opportune time for all of us to



FSU Rep Ashley Ubrhien

have our say in the future of the company we work for and the best way to do that is with one voice through our Union", said Ashley.

Because FSU know that staff should get a say in a process that will ultimately affect them our Organisers are visiting workplaces to hold meetings and hear feedback. If you missed a visit to your workplace call FSU on 1300 366 378 or email nswact@fsunion.org.au to have your concerns heard or get advice and assistance.

There are a number of things IAG must do immediately to make this process easier and fairer for staff. NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Geoff Derrick explains...

"IAG should recognise and support its staff through this process. It can do that by ensuring no staff cuts occur without a corresponding drop in workloads to make sure work quality isn't sacrificed and by taking a respectful approach where any redundancies are voluntary, transparent and if necessary with pay reviews bought forward to recognize the hard work of staff", said Geoff.

Staff are the solution to the current crisis,

not the cause. It will take the commitment and hard work of IAG staff to improve its bottom line and the recovery program should encourage, recognise and reward staff for working through the changes.

Fair treatment for staff...

- There should be no staff cuts without a corresponding reduction in workloads.
- Selections for redundancies and new positions should be open and transparent to give credibility to new structures.
- All redundancies should be voluntary.
- If necessary, annual pay reviews should be brought forward for redundant staff so they get paid at 2008 rates.
- **For advice, support and representation call FSU on 1300 366 378.**

Secretary's Report

Geoff Derrick - State Secretary

Global Warming Turns up the Heat on IR



With one of the hottest and driest continents on earth, Australia's economy and environment will be one of the hardest and fastest hit by climate change if we don't act now. There is no doubt that we must support measures to protect the environment, the do nothing option is far too dangerous and expensive in the long run.

Our union is planning now to meet the industrial challenges of global warming that will inevitably present over the next few years

The Government's climate change strategy is based on three pillars:

- reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions
- adapting to climate change that we cannot avoid
- helping to shape a global solution.

The Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme or "carbon trading" will, for the first time, place a limit, or cap, on the amount of carbon pollution industry can emit.

Australia is heavily engaged in the next phase

of international negotiations. We need to proceed with well-considered domestic action if our nation is to play a constructive role in shaping a global system where all countries play their proper role.

By adopting carbon trading, Australia will join other developed nations in the fight to reduce carbon pollution. Schemes are already operating in twenty seven European countries. Twenty-eight states and provinces in the US and Canada are introducing carbon trading to reduce pollution, as is New Zealand. In the US both Presidential candidates are committed to introducing schemes to reduce carbon pollution and Japan is considering introducing a scheme.

The carbon trading scheme will be designed to send a "price signal" to consumers by making higher polluting goods and services more expensive. Overall the impact is expected to be in the order of a 1% increase in the cost of living. The scheme is planned to come into force in 2010 – the same time as the new industrial relations system to replace the discredited WorkChoices.

Without effective unions working to secure a better balance between the power of employers

and the rights of working people as we negotiate our way through to a cleaner and greener future for the next generation of Australians we will see sharp segmentation of our community into the haves and have nots.

Our Union must be ready for the introduction of a greener economy where petrol and food prices are higher at the same time as global finance markets drive down job security and accelerate cost saving measures such as off-shoring. The FSU agenda for meeting these challenges will be built on;

Membership and industrial strength – more members delivering better collective outcomes

Political and community influence – working to ensure that governments understand and respond to the needs of our industry and our people

Union movement strength – because these challenges are beyond our industry and our country, we will work with others locally and internationally on share goals

Join us as we play our part in ensuring that Australia has a greener and fairer future.

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NSW/ACT Executive

The NSW/ACT Executive is made up of finance industry workers and is the governing body of FSU in NSW & the ACT.



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Merger Update

FSU meets Gail Kelly



FSU NSW/ACT Westpac Member Council President Linda Schofield-Olsen

"...a great opportunity for our Union to put the important questions to those making the decisions about the merger..."

At a meeting between FSU officers, Westpac CEO Gail Kelly and Senior Westpac Executives, FSU was able to raise concerns such as lack of staff and relief, offshoring and concerns around the merger directly with the top decision makers in Westpac.

FSU raised the issues of staffing and relief, difficulties accessing leave and the need for more consultation with Gail who responded that staff issues were a core value and committed to listen to issues raised by FSU.

FSU said there was a need for more information to be provided to staff about the merger and changes associated with it. Westpac proposed that arrangements be made for FSU to meet with key executives working on the merger.

FSU NSW/ACT Westpac Member Council President Linda Schofield-Olsen is looking forward to those meetings occurring...

"Just like the meeting with Gail, I think it will provide a great opportunity for our Union to put the important questions to those making the decisions about the merger", she said.

"It's important when FSU Organisers are visiting workplaces we give them our views and concerns, or provide them through the Union's website, so they can be directly fed into those discussions", she said.

FSU asked Gail to put a freeze on offshoring to spare staff the double whammy of going through a large merger and the possibility of having their job offshored. Gail said offshoring would continue where the bank believed it would make sense to do so and on Wednesday August 6 an announcement was made that another 55 jobs would be offshored from the Concord Service Centre.

FSU asked Gail to commit the bank to entering into discussions for a new collective agreement that would secure conditions of employment for Westpac staff. Gail did not respond to the request in the meeting however agreed to take the request on board.

If Westpac is truly committed to its people, then a new collective agreement is essential to provide staff with the certainty and security around conditions of employment while addressing the issues of lack of staffing and relief. A new collective agreement could also contain protections around offshoring as the current St George agreement does.

FSU is very keen to enter into constructive discussions with the bank and to talk with Westpac about the issues that matter most to staff. In the end, we want to make Westpac a better bank, not just a bigger one.

Why we say... "No Merger"

- 5000 jobs could go
- Loss of a strong independent competitor to the big banks
- Possible higher fees and charges
- Branches in close proximity to each other at risk of closure
- Loss of iconic St George brand and people friendly culture
- Loss of superior St George conditions of employment
- More takeovers to follow

4 Steps you can take today to stop the merger...

1. Sign the petition online to Treasurer Wayne Swann and ask your family, friends and workmates to sign – www.fsunion.org.au for details.
2. Show your support and join the Union and encourage your workmates to join.
3. Write a letter to your local Federal member of parliament or the editor of a newspaper. www.fsunion.org.au has all the information you need.
4. Visit the save the dragon website: www.savethedragon.org.au

\$21 a week extra?

Workers on the minimum award rate have been granted a \$21.66 a week pay increase by the Australian Fair Pay Commission to keep pace with the cost of living but there are some in our industry who haven't received a pay increase at all in recent times.

While the lowest paid in our workforce

(ie those who work on award rates of pay) have been granted an increase, some working under performance based pay systems without across the board safety net increases are getting no increase in their salaries at all highlighting how unfair these systems of pay are.

FSU NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Geoff Derrick explains...

"As employers in our industry move away from across the board pay increases to performance based pay people are inevitably missing out on pay increases due to

factors outside their control", said Geoff.

"Performance pay outcomes are often tied to the ability to reach ever increasing sales targets in a market where those targets are becoming very difficult to reach with increased interest rates and people curbing their use of credit and household spending", he said.

"Performance pay certainly has its place as a bonus reward system but workers are entitled to across the board pay increases that keep pace with the cost of living", said Geoff.

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 Authorised by Geoff Derrick, Secretary, NSW/ACT Branch

Many FSU members have partners, friends and family who work in the construction industry and would be aware they are still subjected to the harsh and unfair laws imposed on them by the former Howard Federal Government. These laws need to be fixed to bring the rights of building workers back into line with those of other workers and because they have the potential to be applied to any industry, including finance.

In 2005, the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) was introduced and so far 80 individual workers have been made to attend secret meetings with the ABCC to answer questions about every day workplace matters.

If a worker refuses to attend a meeting with the ABCC or answer questions during the course of a meeting, they can be jailed for six months which is unprecedented in Australian law and does not apply even in criminal cases.

In one case, a university lecturer has been threatened with imprisonment and forced to attend an ABCC interrogation after he witnessed an incident on a city street as he passed a construction site.

Even the International Labor Organisation (ILO) has previously condemned these laws several times and ILO representatives have made personal appeals to the Federal Government to abolish the construction laws and the ABCC.

These laws while only applying to building workers at present, could quite easily be applied to any industry, including the finance industry so its very important these laws are fixed to stop them going further and to give building workers the same rights as all workers.

Support construction workers by signing the CFMEU petition which can be found at www.cfmeu-construction-nsw.com.au/taabolabcc.htm and return it to CFMEU, 12 Railway Street, Lidcombe 2141. Visit the website www.constructingrights.com for more information.



A man is in custody after Robbery and Serious Crime Squad detectives charged him over a number of armed hold-ups on banks last year.

The man was arrested at Goulburn Police Station and questioned by Robbery and Serious Crime Squad detectives from Strike Force Redver.

The strike force was established last year to investigate a number of armed robberies on financial institutions in Sydney between September and November.

The man, aged 31 from Leichhardt, was refused bail and appeared in Goulburn Local Court yesterday afternoon charged with:

- Six counts of armed robbery with a dangerous weapon,
- Three counts of attempted armed robbery with a dangerous weapon, and
- Four counts of carried in conveyance taken without consent.

The charges relate to incidents at banks in Campsie, Bexley, Burwood, Ramsgate, Flemington, Rozelle and Newtown, as well as a hotel in Leichhardt.

The man was remanded into custody and is due to appear in Sydney's Central Local Court on Wednesday 1 October 2008.



Gossip!

This one floored us!

A bank branch belonging to one of the big four has been waiting for over 6 months for a floor. Over that timeframe, staff have been working on the bare concrete slab. The reason it hasn't been fixed? Because the bank says it's not within budget!

It's about time!

After convincing the CBA they'd forgotten to give their staff a day off for the APEC public holiday, it appears another employer has forgotten as well and FSU is in the process of gently reminding them about their obligations. After all, APEC was a while ago now so we believe it's about time people got their entitlements!

Blacklisted!

On trying to book a workplace visit via email, an FSU Organiser got a bounce back message to the email saying it didn't reach the intended recipient. He was a bit shocked when he read the content of the bounce back message and saw (and we quote) "Sorry, your email address has been blacklisted". We thought the days of blacklisting were well and truly past us but clearly some employers think not! It's illegal in NSW and we're on to it.