

Robbing Peta to pay Paul? ONRSR package could hurt newer and lower paid staff

ONRSR Chief Executive, Sue McCarrey, has today advised staff the agency intends to put its latest enterprise agreement proposal to a vote.

The CPSU is yet to be formally notified but understands the offer will include:

- » An annual two per cent or CPI pay rise (whichever is greater)
- » A \$1000 cash payment
- » A revised classification schedule with additional incremental steps and restrictions on progression.

If the package is endorsed by a majority of employees, it will mean it will take longer and be potentially harder for staff to reach the top-tier salary at their classification level.

The CPSU assumes the purpose of additional incremental steps and imposing new restrictions on progression is to:

- » Off-set the up-front cost associated with the \$1000 sign-on payment
- » Effectively lower the amount employees, who are not yet at the top of their grade, are able to earn.

In relation to the second dot point above, we believe that by making incremental progression conditional on individual performance which “exceeds expectations” it will be relatively easy for the agency to impose a blanket cap on progression.

If we are right and ONRSR do use the new provision as a blunt instrument to control wage growth, it amounts to a proposal to reduce the earning potential for staff not yet at the top of their grade.

In other words, we’d argue, **they are proposing what is, in effect, a pay cut for staff not on the top-tier** (or just under 50 per cent of staff, other than senior managers).

And we suspect this is how they intend to find the money to pay for the \$1000 cash payment they’re offering staff. That is, by taking it from one group (the lower-paid and newer staff) and giving them back a bit, and giving the rest to everyone else (such as senior managers and those at the top of their classification salary range).

Despite what was otherwise reported today, neither the CPSU nor the employee bargaining representatives proposed increasing the number of incremental steps; at least not to our knowledge, and not during any formal bargaining meetings. That suggestion is blatantly false.

At our last meeting (on Tuesday), the CPSU and the other employee bargaining representative jointly advocated retaining the existing step-to-grade ratio, and tying incremental progression to performance “at expectation.”

Finally, the CPSU has argued consistently that a minimum increase of two per cent is too low, when framing a national enterprise agreement. We have explained that even with the inclusion of the \$1000 cash payment ONRSR are offering (which would of course be subject to tax), most staff would fall behind inflation (meaning a reduction in



Robbing Peta to pay Paul? ONRSR package could hurt newer and lower paid staff

'real wages') due to geographical considerations.

At present the consumer price index for Adelaide (2.3%), Sydney (2.2%) and Melbourne (2.2%) are tracking well above the national figure of 1.9% (see the December Quarter 2017, ABS Capital City statistics below):

Sydney	113.3	0.7	2.2
Melbourne	112.3	0.7	2.2
Brisbane	112.3	0.8	1.9
Adelaide	111.2	0.7	2.3
Perth	109.9	0.4	0.8
Hobart	110.3	1.0	2.1
Darwin	109.7	0.3	1.0
Canberra	110.3	0.6	2.2
Weighted average of eight capital cities	112.1	0.6	1.9

As with any offer on pay and conditions, we'll take it to our members before determining a final position. However, the CPSU encourages all ONRSR staff to treat the agency's proposal with caution.

Not a member? Join your state CPSU branch today:

» **NSW**

membership.psa.asn.au/register

» **Western Australia**

cpsucsa.org/join

» **South Australia**

cpsu.asn.au/membership/join-now/psa-application-form

» **Victoria**

cpsuVIC.org/forms/join.php

» **Queensland**

cpsu.org.au/join/asp/join.asp

United we Bargain, Divided we Beg!

