

Water NSW seek FWC assistance with bargaining impasse

Water NSW has written to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to ask for assistance with bargaining. This is despite earlier commitments to further discussions with the unions before seeking external support.

The Corporation's application to FWC alleges a "bargaining dispute", despite the willingness of the respective unions and other employee representatives to continue to participate in good faith bargaining. It should also be noted that at no stage, even following the company's failed attempt to introduce a new enterprise agreement that would have stripped away staff employment conditions, has the CPSU NSW sought to engage in industrial action. Instead your union has promoted a constructive dialogue with Water NSW and its representatives.

In our view, it has been Water NSW – or its political masters – who have been the aggressors throughout bargaining. It was Water NSW that tried to avoid paying the 3.3 per cent awarded by FWC to employees covered by copied state awards.

It was Water NSW that snubbed union and other employee representatives and chose to attack employment conditions with a sub-standard proposal that would have left many staff worse off with an opaque pay system and annual increases less than CPI. It's been Water NSW that has resisted or delayed attempts to reconvene regular bargaining sessions this year.

When we last met with Water NSW on 2 May, all parties agreed – after reviewing the key points of difference following last year's unsuccessful UEA ballot – that we would reconvene on 6 June in an effort to focus on those key issues before considering alternatives. In spite of that commitment, Water NSW chose to lodge the dispute application without discussing it with any of the employee bargaining representatives.

If Water NSW had bothered to ask, we may have consented and agreed to lodge the application jointly.

Frankly, we have had a gutful of the corporation's hard-ball tactics, it's game playing, it's ideology and it's rip-offs. It's time for clear, practical, pragmatic and sensible solutions that everyone can have confidence in.

