

Enterprise bargaining 2021 update, including Ausgrid pay offer

Your Union, the CPSU NSW, along with other unions, has participated in 13 bargaining sessions with Ausgrid Management for a new *Ausgrid Enterprise Agreement 2021*, to date.

As members will recall bargaining began in late October last year.

Recap on Ausgrid items

On 1 December 2020 Ausgrid published its EA items on the intranet (see below), and previously in a CEO Broadcast. The CPSU NSW would suggest that Ausgrid's "only three changes" does not spell out accurately what Ausgrid is actually seeking.

The intranet update fails to indicate to staff that Ausgrid is actually seeking two significant changes with regard to excess annual leave and working hours.

Excess annual leave

- (a) The existing EA clause allows the employee and their manager to collaborate and develop a plan to reduce an employee's excess annual leave balance within 12 months. Ausgrid wants the ability to direct staff to take leave without the need for any employee input or contribution
- (b) Ausgrid is also seeking to redefine "excess leave balance" so as to significantly reduce the amount of hours that is considered excess leave. Currently excess leave is considered anything at or above 320 hours

Working hours or "operational flexibility"


Ausgrid is seeking the inclusion of a new clause to allow it to unilaterally change start and finish times. It argues that any decision to change an employee's start/finish times should be solely at its discretion and based on "operational needs", without regard to employee's needs or concerns.

The CPSU NSW will continue to oppose both of these above changes.




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Enterprise Agreement Update

from Kathrina Bryen, EGM People



1 December 2020

Dear All

We have now been meeting with employee representatives and Unions for six weeks. As Richard has stated many times, Ausgrid is committed to providing honest, transparent and timely information throughout this process and I am pleased to share a bargaining update below.

Typically, employees would be seeking improved conditions and benefits through enterprise bargaining. In these tough times, with the headwinds we are facing, this is not a typical situation we find ourselves in. Despite this, as always, we remain open to considering proposals for improved work arrangements for our people. Importantly, Ausgrid must operate within its means.

Ausgrid does not believe now is the time for significant change to the Enterprise Agreement (EA). We are committed to preserving all current active entitlements and the only three changes we are seeking are:

- The ability to direct our people to take their excess annual leave to manage wellbeing and stay refreshed
- Change start and finish times with reasonable notice; and
- Schedule employees to undertake planned shift work for a defined period of time, with reasonable notice



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Company Items

Preserve all current, active, EA entitlements and only seek changes to the following 3 items:

1. Taking of annual leave
 - Ability to direct the taking of excess annual leave.
 - Excess being more than 20 days (day worker) 25 days (shift worker)
 - Reasonable notice given (3 months)
2. Operational flexibility
 - Ability to change start and finish times based on operational requirements
 - Reasonable notice given (7 days' notice)
 - Mutual agreement not required
3. Operational flexibility
 - Ability for workers to undertake shift work for a defined period of time based on operational requirements
 - Reasonable notice given (21 days' notice)
 - Mutual agreement not required

Recap on CPSU NSW items

The three items CPSU is pushing for inclusion in the new Ausgrid Enterprise Agreement 2021 are:

1. Increase to scope and number of Special Leave days
2. An increase of compassionate leave from two to three days per year
3. Introduction of a Chronic Illness leave clause

Disappointingly, but unsurprisingly Ausgrid has at this point all but rejected each of these claims.

However, discussions on each proposed clause will be ongoing.

Current wage proposal

We can report that Ausgrid has put the following salary proposal to the combined unions for consideration:

Proposal – year 1

- Wage freeze for the first year of the Enterprise Agreement



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Ausgrid's rationale

- COVID-19 recession impacts reducing revenue
- We need to reduce our costs to become more efficient compared to our peers
- We need to improve our financial metrics
- 7.5% pay increase over the last three years, including 2.25% in March 2020

Proposal – year 2 / year 3

- Increase equal to actual Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the previous calendar year, as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) CPI forecast for calendar year 2021 is 1.0%
- The RBA CPI forecast for calendar year 2022 is 1.5%

Rationale

- CPI is a measure of inflation and therefore measures the change in the cost of goods and services over time. Positive CPI means the cost of goods and services increases
- Results in a wage increase aligned to the increase in the cost of living
- Allows Ausgrid to continue to live within our means and maintain our financial health

As bargaining recommences the combined unions will carefully consider this pay offer.

We will update members in due course.

Know someone who is not a member of the CPSU NSW?

Ask them to join online [HERE](#).

Contact the CPSU NSW

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