

Industrial Update

Pay rises precede restructure

Some academic staff have received a 3 per cent pay increase before an agreement has been reached on award restructuring (*The Australian*, 1 November, p. 14). The Industrial Relations Commission varied the awards in a hearing concerning other disputed matters. The relevant unions took the dispute to the Industrial Relations Commission. The decision that resulted shows the value of unions taking a claim to the Commission in the event of negotiations breaking down.

Award restructuring and women workers

Thirty-nine per cent of women in the workforce work part-time. Problems that women workers face include lack of career paths, lack of recognition of informally acquired skills, poor access to training and low wages.

Award restructuring has the potential to address these problems. A continuing process of monitoring and adjustment will require the active involvement of the parties to the restructuring. This means employers, unions and union members.

Career paths are now linked to education and training. The Department of Employment, Education and Training will oversee the issuing of competency-based assessments of skills. Emphasis on actual competencies achieved should prove to be of use to women whose skills have traditionally been gained informally and have therefore gone unrecognised.

Modular training should reduce the access barriers built into long-term, long-cycle training courses. The training arrangements will be flexible in design. Portability of skills will be obtained if training involves generic, rather than workplace-specific, skills.

(The above information was obtained from a paper written by Robyn McKay, Assistant Secretary, Women's Bureau, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra.)

Award restructuring and job redesign

I have had some enquiries about supervisory structures. One of the stated

objectives of award restructuring is the introduction of flatter organisational hierarchies. This would result in fewer levels in the chain of command. For example, levels four and five may be broadbanded together. In instances like these, former subordinate staff could become equals.

The philosophy behind this is that, if people are given more interesting and complex work, they will not require as much close supervision. New organisational structures may be introduced as part of restructuring agreements. People should consult their union if they are unhappy with their reclassification in new structures.

AJA gains coverage for librarians

The Australian Journalists' Association has gained coverage for librarians working in the newspaper industry in New South Wales. This is an example of the trend towards industry unionism. Very few library staff have the benefits of award coverage in private enterprise.

Unfair dismissal

Even library staff who are not covered by unions and work in award-free sections of private enterprise can benefit from the operations of Industrial Tribunals.

For example, an ALIA member who was unfairly dismissed was sufficiently outraged to take the case to a State Industrial Relations Tribunal. Appearing even without representation, the member was rewarded in a conciliated settlement at the Tribunal's direction. The employer conceded 18 weeks' pay as compensation. The member also gained a suitable reference and report of work history.

If this case had gone to a formal hearing, the Tribunal would have decided on an appropriate period of notice. This is not automatically the length of the pay period, but depends on the occupation. In a recent decision, 6 months' notice was considered appropriate for the manager of a manufacturing company who had been dismissed.

Such cases rely on precise legal and industrial facts. ALIA members — particularly those without union coverage — should consult me for advice in cases such as unfair dismissal and incorrect periods of notice.

Book review

Job prospects Australia — does your job really have a future? by Rod Stinson, Hobsons Press.

This book forecasts employment growth or demand for 250 occupations up to mid-1992. Emphasis is placed on assessing whether the numbers of people required in certain occupations are going to increase or decrease in the medium term.

Unfortunately, *Job prospects* is not a complete guide for people considering entering a particular profession. For example, it does not discuss the number of skilled or qualified people looking for existing job vacancies.

Useful details for each occupational group include job descriptions, method of entry, descriptions of employers, training outlook and a job outlook. Librarians and library technicians have an average job outlook with job increases close to the national average (8-9 per cent). Jobs for library clerks are predicted to grow, but at a rate below that of the national growth of jobs.

Tom McKeon

Industrial Information Officer



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Due to the airline dispute, the National Staff Development Seminar, due to be held in Adelaide 16 and 17 November, 1989, has been deferred to July, 1990.

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