



Media Release

THE
SERVICES
UNION

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Attention: General reporters and Political reporters

For Immediate Release

Legislation leaves water workers high and dry *Some workers set to lose 80% of redundancy provisions*

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A REAL CHANGE

The Electrical Trades Union and The Services Union demanded the Attorney General intervene to change legislation he brought in which is now being exploited by council owned water company Queensland Urban Utilities, the legislation will see some workers who are forcibly retrenched, lose up to 80% of their redundancy entitlements.

ETU State Organiser Scott Reichman said the legislation, upheld by the Industrial Relations Commission on Thursday would allow QUU to forcibly retrench members of its workforce without paying the redundancy provisions contained in the current negotiated Enterprise Agreement (currently three weeks per year of service), provisions that have been maintained and advanced by trade - offs and compromises on wages and conditions over the years. The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission says the company would only be obliged to pay the minimum 16 weeks.

We have many examples of members who will be left struggling to make ends meet. However, the starkest example relates to Dave who started as an apprentice at 18 working for the city council, he's been with the company for 40 years. Due to Newman and Blieje's IR changes, if he is forcibly retrenched he will be entitled to just 16 weeks' worth of redundancy payments, approximately \$16K gross. On the other hand if the QUU was forced to abide by the negotiated agreement he could plan for retirement or retraining with dignity and respect with 120 weeks' worth of redundancy payments.

"These are hardworking, loyal employees who in many cases have forgone market rates and higher pay rises to maintain job security and redundancy entitlements, provisions that have now been trashed by Government ineptitude. I mean most of these guys are long term council/water employees and 16 weeks won't even pay the rent let alone retraining that will be required to secure work in what is a tight labour market, they deserve better than this." Mr Reichman said.

To make matters even worse before the ink was dry on the Commission's findings QUU were out there telling employees their jobs were up for grabs.

Secretary of The Services Union Neil Henderson said it is an orchestrated attack on workers' rights.

"The impact of this decision will be tested shortly as it is clear that QUU was not engaging in these proceedings out of idle curiosity. We will fight for the rights of QUU workers to ensure they are treated fairly and reasonably, Mr Henderson said.

"The Newman Government, which has no respect for industrial agreements, or the people who work under them, had legislated that any provision in an agreement which prevents an employer from forcibly retrenching an employee is of 'no effect'."

Both Unions called on the Attorney General to intervene and fix the mess because this is a direct result of government intervention and the buck stops with Attorney General Jarred Blieje they said.