



Government reject pay offer before election

At meeting #6 for your new Enterprise Agreement, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS) reported back on a unanimous request of Unions and Bargaining Representatives to consider a 3% interim pay increase in recognition of the significant disadvantage to staff of the current 2 year pay freeze.

The 5th and 6th meetings took place Fridays 22nd and 29th April 2016. On 21st April M&PS responded to the ASU request to estimate a cost for a 3% per annum remuneration increase. Instead of providing the cost; which is above the 2% annualised increase prescribed in the Government's Bargaining Policy, the Department of Finance costed a 1% increase as a base figure.

Delegates and other bargaining representatives' views were heard on the pay freeze of the last 2 years. The lack of meaningful bargaining represented by the APSC policy line on remuneration was also canvassed and the point most robustly put was the implication a potential election to be called in early May, will have on the significant numbers of staff who work for retiring MPs and Senators and face termination without a pay increase.

On 22nd April, the bargaining committee made a unanimous request for government to consider an interim 3% interim pay increase before an election is called. On the 29th April, M&PS reported that the offer was rejected by government and no counter offer was made.

The ongoing pay freeze represent significant hardship for staff facing termination

In response to the continued line put by M&PS that the APSC policy sets a pre-bargaining maximum pay offer at 2% (subject to trade-off on your conditions of employment) discussions about a fair and reasonable pay offer from government continue. The likelihood of an election being called will disrupt bargaining by preventing any decision about a remuneration package by the incumbent Minister and place continued delay on a remuneration increase until after an election.

It's worth reviewing the fact that your last Agreement was made with a nominal expiry date to fall during the expected mid-term of this government. The date was calculated with the intention that in good faith, bargaining would commence well before an election period. Through your Employee Consultative Group (ECG) the ASU requested advice from M&PS about commencement of bargaining well before June 2015 but unexplained delays by government have allowed the Agreement to pass the nominal expiry

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date and bargaining to progress well into a potential election period.

All delays by government continue without sufficient justification and whilst the Minister has discretion to find an interim remedy. An interim position would compensate for the delays with the commencement of bargaining and in particular, be welcomed by staff who work for retiring MPs and are facing potential termination without a pay increase.

On 29th April, the bargaining committee again unanimously agreed to put the request back to government for proper consideration, requested a counter offer if it is once again rejected, as well as requested that M&PS commit to recommencing bargaining at the earliest possible time after an imminent election.

Act now

After the last meeting, Delegates of both Unions also met to discuss the collective interest in approaching MPs and Senators about a meeting with the Special Minister of State (SMOS) Mathias Cormann.

It's important that staff now speak to employing MPs and Senators about your frustration at the lack of a pay increase, which will now be delayed further due to inaction by the SMOS and the impending Federal Election. Ask your employing MP or Senator to chat to the SMOS to raise concerns that their staff are not being properly remunerated for their work.

Other news and Next meeting

The current Shadow Employment Minister and SMOS, Brendan O'Connor has announced that an ALP government would immediately end the fundamental problem for undertaking bargaining in good faith and discard the APSC policy to offer better pay deals. The bargaining committee agreed that in the event of an election being called, the next meeting would be held during the last week of July 2016. In the meantime, the ASU will continue to negotiate members' claims and draft clauses with M&PS.

Time to join the ASU

For more information, please get in touch with the relevant contact below.

If you're not a member of the ASU, you can join online now at our secure form: <https://www.asu.asn.au/asujoin>

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