

OTC keeping up with private sector: unions Govt authorities' pay-deals check

By MIKE TAYLOR,
Public Administration Writer

All pay negotiations between government authorities and their employees will be checked to ensure they have not breached the wage-fixing guidelines.

The move follows this week's revelations that the Overseas Telecommunications Commission has agreed to pay technicians wage increases of up to \$90 a week.

The Government has embarked on some hasty house-keeping to ensure that OTC, among all government-controlled authorities, is alone in its apparent breach of the wage principles.

The checks are being made at the same time that the pay rises granted the OTC technicians are merely keeping pace with pay rates in the private sector. Further, the unions have warned that without such pay rises key personnel will be lost to the private sector as it gears up for January's deregulation of the telecommunications sector.

A Government spokeswoman confirmed yesterday that the Minister for Transport and Communications, Ralph Willis, had written to the board of OTC demanding details of all wage negotiations with all of its employees.

The minister wants specific details of

Government moves on OTC pay rises

The Government would refer the Overseas Telecommunications Commission's cost and pricing structure to the Prices Surveillance Authority after big pay rises awarded to technicians, the Treasurer, Paul Keating, said yesterday.

The authority cannot make determinations on whether the rises conform with the guidelines, but can take steps to prevent the increased labour costs simply being passed to consumers.

The Minister for Transport and Communications, Ralph Willis, has already moved to ask the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to convene a hearing requiring OTC to justify the rises.

The negotiations with the technicians but, as well, he wants details of reported pay rises for OTC executives amounting to 20 per cent.

Yesterday, Government spokesmen confirmed that the checks on wage negotiations would extend beyond OTC to other government authorities and business enterprises, particularly those fully bound by the so-called "coordination guidelines".

The coordination guidelines apply to virtually all government-controlled organisations.

They demand that the managements report all wage negotiations that could be affected by the national wage-fixing principles.

The coordination guidelines are overseen by the Department of Industrial Relations.

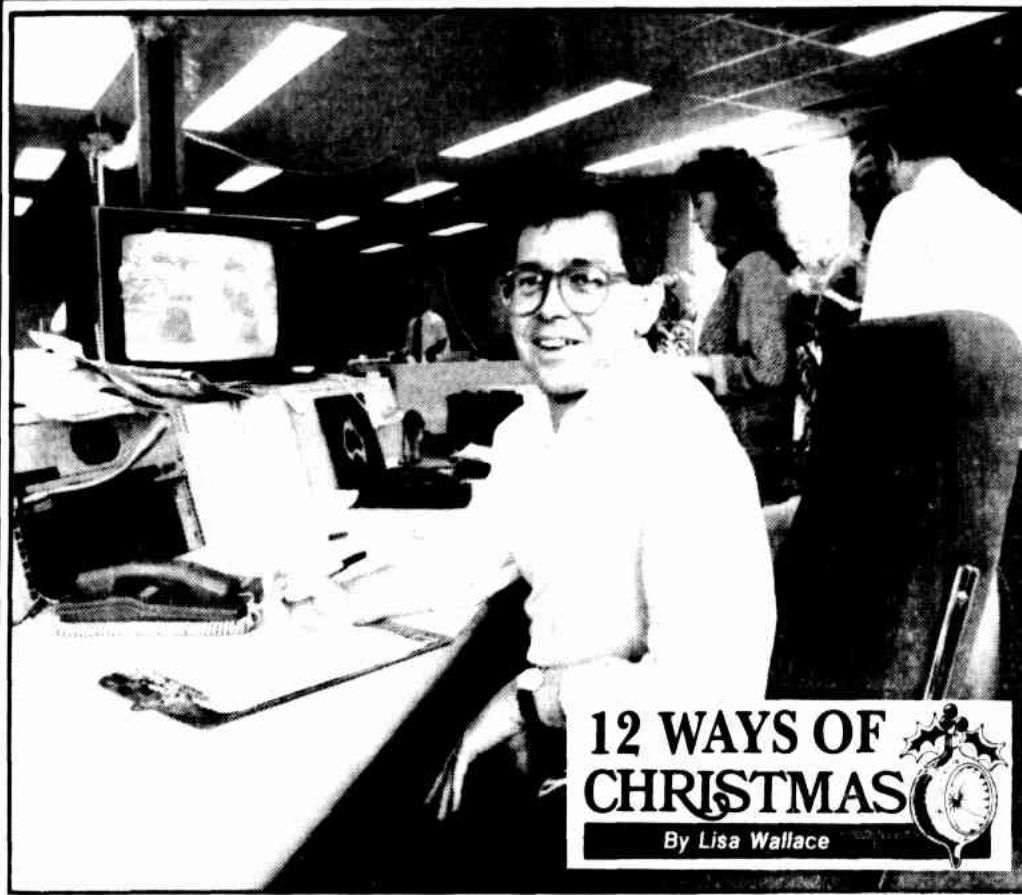
Sources within the department confirmed yesterday that it appeared OTC had failed to report the pay rises granted to technicians in line with the coordination guidelines.

However, yesterday the Australian Telecommunications Employees' Association, and the Australian Telephone and Phonogram Officers' Association defended their colleagues employed at OTC.

"The rises have been firmly based on wage rates that are already being paid to similar workers in the private sector," the federal secretary of the ATEA, Mick Musumeci, said.

"Currently the private sector is taking advantage of low public-sector wage rates for skilled workers."

"They are widely recruiting from the public sector to get set for the first phase of telecommunications deregulation in January 1989."



Trevor Sharkie, who will be producing the news at Capital Television on "just another day", Christmas Day.

A day like any other for Trevor

Trevor Sharkie has not had Christmas at home for eight years and tends to treat December 25 as just another day on the job.

As a news producer for Capital Television he will probably spend most of the day in the newsroom organising reporters and piecing together the news bulletins we will see throughout the day.

It is his first Christmas with Capital Television, but he fondly remembers many December 25s within the walls of 2CC.

With two reporters under his control for the day, Trevor assumes they will cover traditional stories, including the delivery of Christmas presents to children in hospital and, you guessed it, a story about people who work on Christmas Day.

Dusk should see him on his way home after another tiring day at the office.

But he will not be missing out on a good Christmas dinner.

"For the last couple of years I've been going to a Christmas Eve dinner with some European friends who celebrate Christmas Eve rather than Christmas Day, and I'll be having Christmas dinner with other people," he said.

"So I guess you could say I'm getting it twice."

"Working on Christmas Day doesn't really bother me, it really is just another day."

"And I think I get an extra day's holiday for working Christmas Day."

Remember Trevor as you flop down on to the lounge after that third helping of turkey, he will be the hatted-looking one behind the camera.

— LISA WALLACE

10 die in charter aircraft crash in Western Australia

PERTH: Ten people died yesterday in Australia's worst air crash for eight years.

Police said the twin-engine turboprop aircraft was believed to have been carrying mining-company directors and secretaries when it plunged to the ground about 300km north of Kalgoorlie. All those on board — the pilot and nine passengers — had been killed.

Mr Jim Hurst, the manager of the nearby Start Meadow Station, reported the crash to authorities at about 1.20pm Canberra time.

A Civil Aviation Authority spokesman, Doug Holden, said Mr

Hurst had seen the plane flying straight and level at about 5000 feet, before it had turned to the left and spiralled steeply to the ground.

Mr Hurst had reported some storm activity in the area, but had said the aircraft appeared to be in clear air, Mr Holden said.

The plane had been totally destroyed.

Police have not released the names of those killed, but said they were believed to be four men and six women. A 10th passenger was believed to have missed the flight.

The Mitsubishi MU2 had been on charter from Broughton Air Ser-

vices to a mining company, believed to be Independent Resources Ltd.

The manager of Broughton, Kerry Smith, said the aircraft had left Perth at 5pm on Thursday for the Bellevue gold mine, 480km north of Kalgoorlie and about 750km north-east of Perth.

Yesterday's accident was the worst since 13 people were killed when a Beech King Air crashed into a sea wall in Sydney on February 21, 1980. Twenty-nine people died in Australia's worst aviation disaster when a TAA F28 crashed at Mackay on June 10, 1980.

IN BRIEF

Late-night shopping

The Member for Canberra, Ros Kelly, said yesterday that late-night shopping to 9 o'clock would be allowed from Monday to Thursday next week, with normal shopping hours on Friday and Christmas Eve. Trading today is allowed to 5pm.

Safe by-election

SYDNEY: Four candidates will face the polls today in the by-election for the safe ALP State seat of Wolliston, near Newcastle. The seat became vacant last month following the death of a former NSW Treasurer, Ken Booth. The ALP candidate, John Mills, is tipped to win.

Yass road death

A 16-year-old learner driver from Mount Pritchard, Sydney, died yesterday when the car he was driving on the Hume Highway 15km north of Yass collided with a semi-trailer travelling in the same direction and burst into flames, police said. The boy's father, a passenger, was unhurt.

Merry-go-round

The Civic merry-go-round will be reopened for the school holidays. The landmark has been undergoing restoration, which is not finished. However, 24 of the 32 horses are ready for the opening, which will be at 10am on Monday.

Oaks Estate Park

The Oaks Estate Park in River Street was opened yesterday by the Member for Canberra, Ros Kelly.

Year 12 graduates

About 2900 students from ACT public secondary colleges graduated this week receiving their Year 12 Certificates. This is 700 more than last year's total.

Hope on beer

Truck drivers are expected to lift bans on the delivery of Carlton and United Breweries' beers to the ACT today.

One of the five owner-drivers involved in the two-week long dispute said last night they were ready to resume deliveries, pending negotiations on contracts and health and safety issues. A TWU representative would report to drivers this morning.

Lotteries

Jackpot Lottery 3418, drawn yesterday, 1st, \$100,000 No 142154 nfp, Bel-ling; 2nd, \$12,000 No 145274 nfp, East Gosford; 3rd, \$5000 No 105302 nfp, Marayong. Consolation \$1000: 142153 and 142155. Jackpot now stands at \$180,000 in Jackpot 3419, drawn Monday.

Last night's Tatts Two numbers: 62, 22. Division 1 prize \$590.

War-crime Bill in last stages

By DEIRDRE MAHONEY

The last of 34 speakers finished an emotional debate on the War Crimes Amendment Bill in the Senate yesterday and it passed the second-reading stage.

The Bill now enters the committee stage, which will begin on Monday. Unlike the second reading, where senators speak for up to 20 minutes according to their philosophical beliefs on the principles of the Bill, the committee stage addresses the Bill's fine print.

The acting Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Gareth Evans, congratulated and thanked senators yesterday for a debate in which strong opinions were expressed and emotions ran high, but the issue was rarely trivialised or made farcical.

He was glad to hear that, although the Opposition did not agree with

some aspects of the Bill unless amended, they supported its basic thresholds.

Major criminals, "those responsible for the deaths of human beings", must be exposed.

The shadow attorney-general, Neil Brown, said in a statement yesterday that the Government's amendments were "woefully inadequate" and had "compounded the problems with the Bill".

Until the Government accepted the two major amendments the Opposition wanted — the exclusion of Australian ex-service personnel and allowing courts to stay proceedings — there was "enormous potential for injustice", and the Opposition would vote against the Bill.

A spokesman for the Minister for Justice, Senator Michael Tate, said a final vote on the Bill was expected on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The extra Senate sittings had upset the usual system of "pairs", where, if a member of either side of Parliament were absent, a corresponding member from the opposite side would abstain from voting.

The Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, Senator Graham Richardson, and the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, Senator John Button, would return from the United States and China for the sittings.

Senator Irina Dunn (Ind, NSW) said yesterday that she would support the Bill. Liberal Senator Peter Baume (NSW) will abstain from voting, the Democrats, except for Senator Paul McLean (NSW), would vote with the Government, and other Independents would join the Opposition. The Bill will probably be passed 39-36.

Illegitimacy is irrelevant

Illegitimacy has become legally irrelevant in the ACT with the introduction of the Birth (Equality of Status) Ordinance, the minister responsible for the ACT, Clyde Holding, announced yesterday.

Mr Holding welcomed the introduction of the ordinance, which kept pace with contemporary community attitudes. More than 15 per cent of all births registered in the ACT were ex-nuptial.

Among other things, the ordinance abolishes any rule that makes gift of property to an illegitimate child void. It also creates certain presumptions of paternity arising from the fact of cohabitation between the parties, provides for an easier administrative system for paternity to be acknowledged by the father, and provides court access to obtain a declaration of parentage.

Santas go short this Christmas

SYDNEY: Santas across New South Wales will have to go short this Christmas following a decision by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to adjourn for another two weeks their claim to be paid actors' rates.

According to Actors Equity, some Santas are earning just \$7.50 a hour on shop assistants' rates compared with the actors' rate of \$73.83 for a three-hour performance.

Yesterday's decision in the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission comes as a blow to the state's hundreds of Santas, who feel their performance in front of beard-pulling toddlers warrants better pay.

"They will miss out on this Christmas although there is a slight chance that back payments will be made," said the Actors Equity industrial officer, Anne Britton.

Bond deal: Laws heads new firm

SYDNEY: Bond Media Ltd announced yesterday a major restructuring, involving two television and nine radio stations, aimed at satisfying cross-media ownership restrictions.

The deal puts Sydney radio personality John Laws at the head of a new company, John Laws Radio Ltd, which will buy nine radio-station licences from Bond Media and become one of Australia's largest radio groups.

Bond Media and Mr Laws would each hold 14.9 per cent of the company, and the remaining 70 per cent was expected to be floated to the public, Bond Media said in a statement.

No details of the price of the two stakes were given. To satisfy the ownership requirements for television stations, Bond Media will buy the STV8 station in Mildura, Victoria, from Sunraysia Television for \$18 million and sell its STW9 in Perth to Sunraysia for \$95 million. Bond Media chairman Warren Jones said Bond regretted giving up control of STW9, but the National Nine network relationship would be maintained.

STV8 would also benefit from close ties with the Nine Network.

Mr Jones and Sunraysia Television's managing director, Eva Presser, said the STV8 sale proceeds would form part of a \$55 million initial payment to Bond Media.

The rest would be paid in five annual interest-free instalments.

Mrs Presser and Mr Jones said present staff and operations would be maintained.

The radio deal covers 2UE Sydney, 3AK Melbourne, 6PM Perth, 8DN Darwin, 6KA Karatha, 6NW Port Hedland, 8GE Geraldton, 6AM Northam, and 6KG Kalgoorlie. Nigel Milan, of 2UE, will be chief executive of John Laws Radio.



HEAD OFFICE: KIAMA ST BOWRAL NSW 2878 PHONE (048) 611333

INVITATION

FOR YOU TO CALL AT OUR NEW CANBERRA SHOWROOM DISPLAY WHERE YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO PURCHASE

BRICKS

1ST QUALITY EXTRUDED FROM \$322 P/1000 DELIVERED

PAVERS

FROM \$13 PER M² DELIVERED PLUS

LONDON 2" RUSTIC ONLY \$13.50 PER M²

ALL MINIMUM OF TWO PALLETS AT

BOWRAL BRICKS

SHOP 6 COSMOPOLITAN COURT, 64 WOLLONGONG ST Fyshwick PHONE 804434 OPEN 6 DAYS MON-FRI 9am-5pm SAT 8.30am-4.30pm

\$1.54b disaster in current account

Continued from Page 1

Despite the worsening balance-of-payments picture over the past three months, the Government has maintained that policy settings are correct and has rejected Opposition calls for a mini-Budget or cuts in government spending.

Monetary policy was tightened again last week, putting further pressure on interest rates but it appears unlikely the Government wants to further tighten monetary policy, which would again raise interest rates, adversely affect investment, and force up the Australian dollar. Any rise in the Australian dollar would make it more difficult to sell Australian exports, further worsening the balance of payments.

With the Government politically committed to tax cuts, it appears to have little alternative but to reduce Government spending to choke off demand which is sucking in high levels of imports while exports continue to decline.

Mr Keating said that the current-account deficit was "clearly much higher than the Government would have wished".

The main reason for the high figure was a rise in imports of capital goods, which was evidence Australia was now seeing a resurgence in investment.

"We've got fiscal policy in the next three months starting to move into surplus," he said. "Monetary conditions are tight and we wouldn't see any particular reason to tighten them further."

"And we've got wages holding generally quite well."

Mr Keating warned that it was essential that income demands remained moderate if Australia was to reap the full rewards of the present investment phase. The Confederation of Australian Industry said that the Government should cut spending to ease the current reliance on tight monetary policy which was keeping interest rates high.

Mr Keating has already conceded that the Government cannot achieve the Budget forecast of a \$9.50 billion current-account deficit for 1988-89, and hinted yesterday that there would be little improvement in nominal terms from last financial year's \$12.20 billion shortfall.

However, he maintained that the current-account deficit would still shrink as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — the Budget forecast the deficit would decline to 3 per cent of GDP, down from 4.1 per cent in 1987-88.

Australia has now recorded a current-account deficit in excess of \$1 billion for the past five months.

CORRECTION

Applicants for training as military pilots are not required to have commercial training first, as reported yesterday.

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL ON ELNA LOCK Pro-4



SAVE A HUGE \$400

PAY ONLY \$799

SRP \$1199

ELNA LOCK L4D Pro-4

THIS OUTSTANDING OVERLOCKER FEATURES

- ★ Differential feed for smooth sewing on stretch and bulky knits
- ★ Three or 4 thread combination, one or two needle
- ★ Excellent tension and stitching quality
- ★ 1500 stitches per minute — fast
- ★ Many accessories
- ★ Real value

SAVE TIME . . . SAVE MONEY
This Christmas special can't last

CANBERRA SEWING
822125 CENTRE 821488
NOW OPP NORMAN ROSS ESCALATORS
WODEN PLAZA

elna