

# Australia Post workers speak out: “We don’t have any faith in the unions”

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27 October 2020

Two Australia Post (AP) workers recently spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* to voice their opposition to a union-enforced restructure that involves the destruction of conditions, and opens the way for mass job cuts and privatisation.

The workers gave their comments after reading earlier WSWS interviews with three of their colleagues, who called for a political and industrial fight against the restructure and a rebellion against the Communication Electrical and Plumbers Union (CEPU) and the Communications Workers Union (CWU).

The two workers, both in Sydney, described the increasing workloads and uncertainty that have accompanied the introduction of an “Alternative Delivery Model” (ADM).

One noted that while the restructure was being implemented on the pretext of the pandemic, management and the unions had done virtually nothing to protect workers from the dangers of COVID-19.

He stated: “When the pandemic first started, we didn’t have enough sanitiser, we didn’t have masks. We didn’t get enough information, so we didn’t know what was happening. Simple health and safety protocols were not introduced. There were no temperature checks or anything like that. It’s ridiculous. They talk about safety, but on the ground it’s not happening. The union is just following management.”

Commenting on the redirection of AP’s activities away from letter delivery and a further concentration on the lucrative parcel sector, the worker explained: “We are under so much pressure. We have had pressure from the pandemic, pressure from management. The work is constantly increasing. Everything has changed for the worse this year.

“We haven’t got to choose what we are doing. We

are just told that we need to drive vans to deliver parcels, or whatever else, and for many of us, the workload has doubled. We didn’t sign up for this. No one is smiling anymore. It used to be that everyone was happy.”

Some colleagues had been “forced to become van drivers because they were going to lose their walking beat. If they don’t have a driving licence, they can’t do it. For van drivers there are many problems. They have to travel all over the place and there are always problems with parking. I know some workers who have been fined for parking in the wrong place multiple times in a single week. Sometimes they have a hundred parcels or more to deliver in a day.”

The worker had heard reports of multiple accidents involving new van drivers, but noted that the management and the unions provided no information about such incidents.

The other worker said: “Everything’s up in the air at the moment. There’s a lot of uncertainty. First it started off with the COVID and now we’re facing all of these changes. It hasn’t stopped all year. A lot of workers are frustrated. Their starting times keep changing. They don’t know whether they’re coming or going half the time.”

Since the restructure began, a new class of workers known as “floaters” had been created. They did not have set duties, so they “don’t know what they’re doing one day to the next. You don’t know what beat you’ve got to do, and there’s still no set future for workers doing driving jobs.

“It doesn’t feel stable, like it used to. Whether they’re trying to restructure to sell it off, or they just want to keep floaters around like relief workers, they’re just trying to save money. They want to get rid of the guys who have been here for a long time.

They're hoping that people will quit. It's not fair. There's such a large volume of parcels, people aren't able to get it done in time.

"What I've seen at other companies I've worked at, is eventually they go down the path where everyone's casual or part-time. No one is permanent. That way it's easier to get rid of people and they don't have anyone who will challenge them."

The worker added: "They want to privatise Australia Post and get rid of everything that is owned by the public. I've seen this scenario before, with public factories and companies being privatised. First they paint the situation as being really bad, they denounce 'lazy workers,' and then they sell it off. They are getting us to deliver more and more parcels because that is a big market. Maybe next they will have us delivering food."

Both workers condemned the unions for imposing the pro-business transformation. "I don't expect anything from the unions, they are all corrupt," one stated. "They haven't been telling us anything. There is a deal between the company and the union but before it was signed the workers had no idea about it. The union just wants to ensure its own position. They act like they are doing something for workers, but they do nothing."

The other commented: "I don't see the unions doing anything. They always seem to wheel and deal with management, but it's always to favour themselves. Instead of increasing pay rates, they negotiate them away, and then they'll throw in an extra family picnic day or something to sweeten it. I don't have any faith in the unions to support the workers against management. Even if a worker is unfairly dismissed, the unions probably won't do anything, they'll support management."

"The real issues never get brought to the union members. They don't give you enough information. A lot of the members are very angry. The officials make the decisions themselves and then they tell the members. It's always like they're the middleman with management. They're giving management feedback so they know what's going on. They started off helping members, but at the end of the day, they side with management. What's the point of paying the membership fees when they don't take a stand on anything, even this new model?"

The first worker condemned a 12-month no-strike

agreement signed between the unions and management while the restructure is implemented. "It sounds like the state of emergencies they impose in third world countries," he said. "If something is happening they just say, no strikes or protests for the next 12 months. It's like a country run by a dictatorship. Only the faces are different, but the actions are the same."

"This is setting a bad example that will be used by the capitalists against other workers. All of them are saying you can't carry out strikes because of the global pandemic. They're using it to take away workers' rights, step by step. This is happening around the world. It's affecting workers everywhere. Once the 12 months is up, then they will say 2 years no strikes, or 5 years no strikes. This is their plan."

The two workers supported their colleagues' call for the formation of a rank and file committee of all postal workers, independent of the unions. "We need some other form of weapon in the place to protect the workers, outside the union," one declared.

The other stated: "Rather than a union, we need something else to fight what is happening to the working class. I'm not expecting anything good for workers from the unions. So we definitely need independent organisations from the unions."

"Otherwise if we follow the unions, all we are going to do is lose. We have had many experiences. We need a knowledge of working class history. You need to learn about the past to fight for the future. We have to unite, but it can't be on the same path as the union, otherwise we will end up like them, so we need a new way."

The worker said he considered himself a socialist, and said it was necessary for utilities, such as Australia Post, to be placed under full public ownership and workers' control.



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