



RTBU NSW LOCO DIVISION NEWSFLASH

September 15, 2023

SSR Enterprise Agreement Update.

Yesterday, the Locomotive Division met with SSR and the independent bargaining representatives. Despite being told last week that there may be some more movement on reducing the duty cycle, SSR told us today that they were not prepared to move from the 4 month (608 hour) proposed duty cycle. As your current Agreement expired on 11 September 2023, we introduced a new claim for back pay for the period from then until a new agreement is reached. SSR were not opposed to this but did have some limitations.

There was further discussion on the claims not yet agreed, but SSR are not yet prepared to move further. They did say that some minor changes are forthcoming, from the feedback sessions, but did not elaborate. Instead, they told us that they would send them out "shortly". They propose another meeting next week to go over these changes.

SSR have indicated that they are then prepared to take the Enterprise Agreement to the members for a vote. The proposed access period for employees to view their new document would commence on 22 September for 7 days. Immediately following this will be a vote, probably on 3 and 4 October. This vote will be electronic, conducted by an external company.

This proposed Agreement is NOT endorsed by your RTBU bargaining team. In our opinion, there remains too many outstanding issues for an agreement. These issues include: -

- **Duty Cycle.** While the reduction of the duty cycle from 988 hours to 608 hours is a good start, it is not enough. Members would be well aware that the duty cycle is constantly manipulated to ensure that you are never ahead on your hours. A 608-hour cycle does not resolve this. They have said that the 608-hour duty cycle would be reviewed at the end of each cycle, but periodic reviews are in your current Agreement and no changes have ever been made to the 988-hour cycle. Can you trust them to change the new agreement?
- **Pay Increases.** SSR are offering pay increases of 5%, 3%, 3% and 3% over the term of the agreement. They have put out some glossy literature to try to convince you that these increases somehow add up to over 38%. They have refused to provide the figures on how that is worked out, simply asking you to trust them. Do you? Remember, SSR Employees have been falling further behind other rail workers for almost a decade, these increases do not do anything to catch up.
- **Overtime Rate.** SSR have offered to standardise the overtime rate at 1.6 of the non-car rate for all Employees (staged over 3 years for Level 4, 4.5 and 5. Others would get it immediately). Our claim was for 1.7. This new rate will see all level 2.5, 3 and 3.5 receive an 8% increase in the first year to offset the reduction in the overtime rate. We say that the overtime rate should be 1.7 of the non-car rate for all levels.
- **Rostering Committee.** SSR have proposed a centralised rostering committee rather than localised committees. Our claim is for each depot to have their own rostering committee. The draft document, received today, still needs consultation and review.

AUTHORISED: Farren Campbell Locomotive Divisional Secretary

Level 4, 321 Pitt St Sydney. NSW 2000



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- **Vehicle Standards.** We asked for minimum standards for cars to include bull bars, especially in remote areas. SSR have refused this and offered to install light bars. While this will improve visibility at night, it probably won't help in case of an animal strike. We have not yet been shown the vehicle standards policy document.
- **Locomotive Standards.** We provided SSR with the RTBU minimum standards for Locomotives and asked that it be included in the Agreement. SSR have refused this claim. We have not been shown SSR's Locomotive Standards document.
- **Dispute Resolution.** Members put forward a claim to modify the dispute resolution process. Currently, if a dispute escalates to the top level, both parties need to agree to vest the Fair Work Commission's powers to resolve the dispute. Our claim would allow either party to give the Commission powers to arbitrate. SSR refuse to amend this clause. If a dispute cannot be resolved and SSR do not agree to arbitration, what is the next step? Their argument that this has never happened does not mean that it could not happen in the future.

What happens next?

If the vote is YES: - SSR have stated that there will be backpay from 17 September 2023. They will also pay out any excess hours in the bank at the 4-month mark to commence the new duty cycle ASAP. The new EA would take effect as soon as it is approved by the Fair Work Commission.

If the Vote is NO: - SSR have threatened to take backpay off the table, permanently. They will reject any claims already won, take a recess from meeting with us, then start the negotiation from the beginning introducing new claims of their own. Essentially, the threat is that if you vote no to a substandard agreement now, you will get to vote on a worse Agreement sometime around the middle of next year, with SSR's expectation that you will then vote yes. This "Our way or the Highway" mentality is in direct conflict with the way they try to sell themselves as employers with the workforce's best interest at heart. They are now starting to show their true colours.

Just because SSR say that negotiations will cease and start over, does not mean that we have to just accept it. RTBU members can vote to take actions to force them back to the negotiating table, if necessary.

Another meeting is scheduled for next week.

Not a Member? Join Now!

If you have any questions about joining,
please contact the RTBU Head Office on (02) 9264 2511.

