



Murdoch University - don't believe the union rhetoric

Next Tuesday, 26 September, the NTEU is undertaking a national public protest about the fact that Murdoch University was successful in having the Fair Work Commission terminate its current enterprise agreement.

The NTEU and ACTU hierarchies are saying that the industrial relations laws are broken and need to be fixed. The NTEU complains that Murdoch University should not have been able to go to the Commission to seek the extinguishment of clauses in its expired enterprise agreement that are arcane, over-prescriptive and which produce inefficiencies in the workplace. Rubbish. An enterprise agreement is an industrial instrument that needs to work for employers as well as employees. Enterprise agreements were introduced by federal legislation more than 25 years ago to accommodate the local needs of the individual workplace that an industry-wide award might not properly cater for. Modern workplaces need modern industrial instruments that allow the enterprise to flourish now and into the future. We have Modern Awards. Likewise, we need modern enterprise agreements - not enterprise agreements that retain federal award prescriptions that date back 25-30 years and which have overlays of bureaucracy built upon through 6 or 7 rounds of bargaining, which is the situation that universities have been and are continuing to seek to remedy.

Murdoch University should be applauded, not castigated, for seeking the changes it has through the processes available under the Fair Work Act. And let's be clear about a few important matters. Murdoch University has made it very clear that it is not seeking to drop people's pay. Indeed, it offered pay increases in its bargaining negotiations. Similarly, Murdoch University has not sought to extinguish other key employment entitlements. Its focus has been on the removal of process prescriptions such as those that impact on the ability of the university to effectively manage change, workload allocation, staff disciplinary matters, and disputes about the operation of the agreement. Murdoch University has not sought to remove compulsory arbitration of such disputes by the Commission.

So, in summary, the ACTU and the NTEU want the laws changed so that enterprise agreements can't be terminated so as to drop people's pay. That's not happening at Murdoch University. The ACTU wants the laws changed so that enterprise agreements can't rule out compulsory arbitration of disputes by the Commission. That's not happening at Murdoch University either.

Rather than trying to incite outrage through a campaign which camouflages the real facts, the NTEU should revisit the enterprise agreement changes that Murdoch

University has been seeking, which are being sought by universities right across the country, and get back to the bargaining table.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.A.' followed by a stylized flourish.

Stuart Andrews

Executive Director

22 September 2017

The Australian Higher Education Industrial Association (AHEIA) is the employer association for the higher education sector, registered under the federal *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.