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DECA Negotiations Collapse

A previous [bulletin](#) addressed Defence's offer of a new collective agreement to replace the current DECA inclusive of pay increases. That offer initially provoked disbelief and then - quite rightly - anger amongst members (and employees more generally).

Ultimately, the source of the difficulty in Defence is the Abbott Government's bargaining policy. This intersection was referenced in a [bulletin](#) in December. If there is any doubt about the effects of the government's policy, consider that not one agency has yet reached agreement under it, more than eight months after they were eligible to do so.

Meeting in Sydney

Defence, unions and two individual bargaining representatives met in Sydney yesterday. This was the first meeting after Defence had revealed the totality of its position.

The unions, informed by the advice of their delegates nationally, advised the Department to the effect that:

- they (the unions) would not characterise the discussions held to date as genuine negotiations;
- Defence's offer was not only unacceptable, but insulting;
- unless there was room to improve that offer considerably, there was no point to further discussion.

The areas of improvement sought by the unions included in particular:

- how productivity is defined;
- the size of the pay increases; and
- the protection of employment conditions.

This is without mentioning the urgent need to remediate the practise of engineering and science within Defence.

Those union delegates who attended yesterday's meeting advised the Department's representatives of the feedback they had received from their members (and employees generally). They did so with passion and without ambiguity. In the case of our two unions, those delegates had been drawn from Joint Logistics Unit Bandiana, DSTO Fisherman's Bend and DSTO Edinburgh.

In response, Defence advised that it was limited in what it could do by the bargaining policy and by the Prime Minister's publicly stated position on APS pay increases. Whilst there might be some room to move, such room was heavily circumscribed – and would not extend to include the definition of productivity.

The unions advised that, on that basis, there was no prospect of agreement being reached between the parties and therefore no point to further discussions. They made clear their willingness to return to the bargaining table, but only if genuine negotiations could be held.

Thereafter, the unions withdrew.

Ballots of the members of our two unions are currently being held. If successful, they will enable protected industrial action be taken, subject to separate decision by the members concerned.

Ballot papers will be posted to members today.

You are urged to:

- **vote;**
- **support each of the 10 questions; and**
- **return your ballot paper promptly**



