

McCain's Offer Leaves Workers Worse Off

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Workers at the McCain's factory in Smithton, Tasmania, are poised to take industrial action as part of negotiating for a new enterprise agreement.

"Taking industrial action was never our preferred option – but workers feel that they've been left with no choice," said John Short, Tasmanian Secretary, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU).

The AMWU has been leading negotiations with McCain's for around 75 workers at the plant, which processes potatoes into frozen chips (french fries).

"All the workers decided together that they had to take action, because under the most recent offer made by the company, they'll all be worse off," said Mr Short.

"McCain's is not moving – they aren't negotiating in good faith with us."

McCain's recently made a 2-year offer that includes a 3% pay rise per year in exchange for trading off a variety of conditions, including reducing weekend penalty allowances.

But simple calculations show that under this offer, a maintenance worker is at least \$91 a week **worse off**, and a production worker is at least \$72 a week **worse off**.

"Workers aren't being unreasonable here - would any normal person accept an offer that would see them lose \$91 every week?" said Mr Short.

"This is not about a pay rise – it's about making sure we don't go backwards, holding onto conditions that have been at the plant for more than 30 years."

McCain's wants to remove or reduce a range of conditions that have been at the plant for more than 30 years, including overtime pay, an allowance for night shift, and weekend penalty rates.

"We are very happy to negotiate in good faith but workers won't accept a deal that leaves them worse off every week," said Mr Short.

"All we're asking is for the Company to realise that this is an unfair offer, and they need to come back to the table and talk to us in good faith to get it sorted out."

In addition, workers have been told by management over the last few years that the Smithton plant has been seen as the best McCain's plant globally.

Tonnage (amount of potatoes processed) has increased from approx. 54,000 tonnes last year to 80,000 this year – showing that productivity is high and the plant is successful.

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