



Monday, May 26, 2008

# Workplace survey results

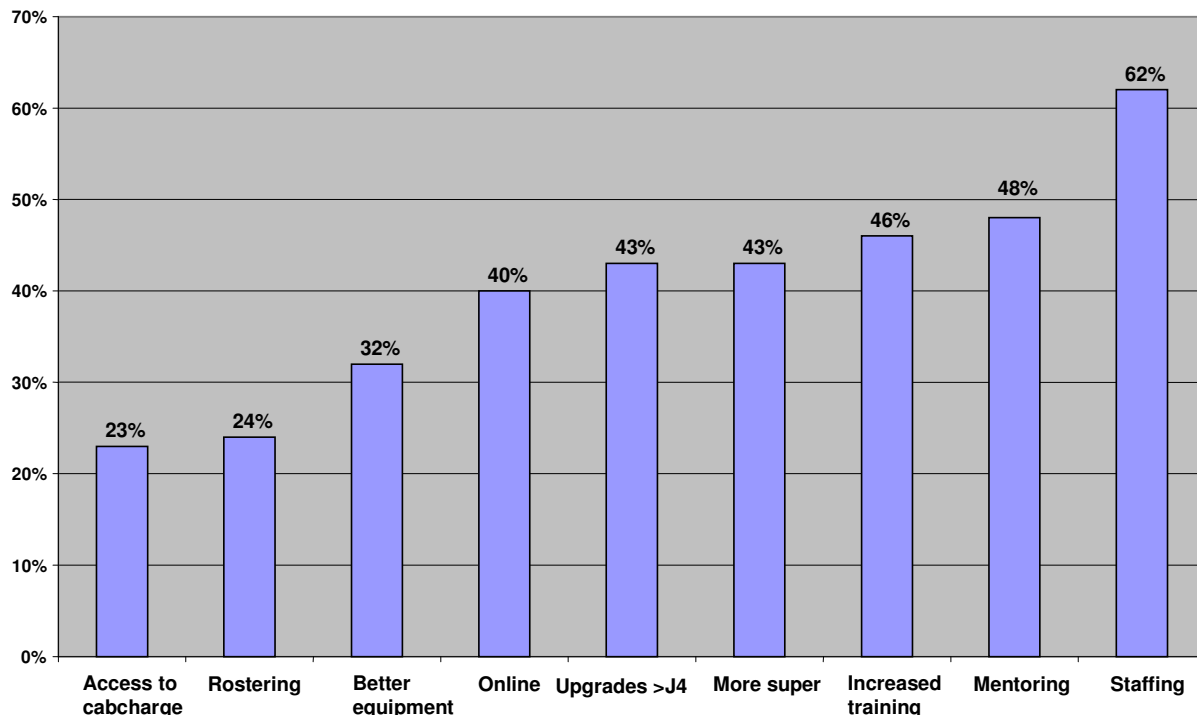
A disturbing picture of overwork with little compensation has emerged at Fairfax Media's metropolitan newspapers and associated websites, according to results of the 2008 workplace survey. The questionnaire, completed by 441 editorial staff last month, is the basis of our log of claims, on page 4 of this document. Thanks to all who participated in the survey.

Starting next week, meetings will be held across all Fairfax mastheads under the metropolitan newspapers collective agreement to endorse the log of claims. It's important that you come along to have your say.

## What you said

It isn't rocket science. More staff, less overtime and more opportunities for staff development add up to a happier workplace. It is clear that editorial staff at Fairfax are feeling the pressure of management's belt tightening, which stands to erode the high quality journalism we strive to uphold. Almost two-thirds of respondents said staffing was an important issue to be addressed in upcoming negotiations, closely followed by mentoring, increased training and more superannuation.

**Which of the following issues are important to you?**



## More work, same pay

Work intensification is a big issue, with 59 per cent of respondents said they had taken on extra duties or gained extra skills in the past two years, but only 13 per cent of those had received a pay rise to recognise this. More specifically, 22 per cent of respondents said their roles had changed due to technology in the past 12 months, but only 1 per cent had received financial compensation.

*"I enjoy the opportunity to expand my skills but there is no time allocated for this - it is added to existing workload - and no training is provided."*

## Overtime

Almost half of all respondents (44 per cent) said they work more than their rostered hours. Most of the overtime is unpaid – in fact, only 3 per cent is recorded at all.

*How many hours extra do you work each week?*

<b>More than 10 hours</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>5-10 hours</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Less than 5 hours</b>	<b>16%</b>

*"Staffing levels is the most important issue, especially as increased workload and poor rostering has caused many younger journalists, in particular, to become demoralised. There is no sense that the company values its staff."*

An extra 10 hours a week minimum overtime from the 30 per cent of survey respondents (the top line in the above graph) adds up to a staggering 164 days worth of work each year that the company pays nothing for. That's 164 days free labour.

It's not only those figures that are alarming. Fifty-seven people reported that their holidays had been rescheduled or cancelled in the past two years, and 94 people have been asked to come in on a scheduled day off. Only two per cent of staff have received a payout for time in lieu that had been recorded and not taken.

## Health and wellbeing

More than one-third of respondents (35 per cent) said they felt pressured to work through illness, and 28 per cent felt their workload was damaging their health and well-being. This damage manifested in the following categories: hard to relax (18%); eye strain (16%); disturbed sleep (16%); irritability (14%); headaches (12%); and RSI (10%).

*"I think that the incessant cost-cutting and reductions in staff levels have had a very damaging effect on staff morale, health and performance. I understand that these are tough times for newspapers, but I don't think that editorial staff are valued highly enough, or treated with sufficient sensitivity or respect. We're simply seen as a cost to the company that should be cut."*

# Upgrades and performance reviews

Sixty per cent of respondents had a performance review in the past 12 months, down from 70 per cent in 2003. Of those who went through the performance review process, 37 per cent found it unsatisfactory.

While most of those surveyed (89 per cent) said they had a chance to state views during the review, 64 per cent said they were not given guidance on how to advance their careers.

Only one-quarter of those surveyed said they had received an upgrade in the past two years (outside of pay rises provided under the collective agreement). Almost half of all respondents (44 per cent) said their current grade did not reflect their work responsibilities and duties.

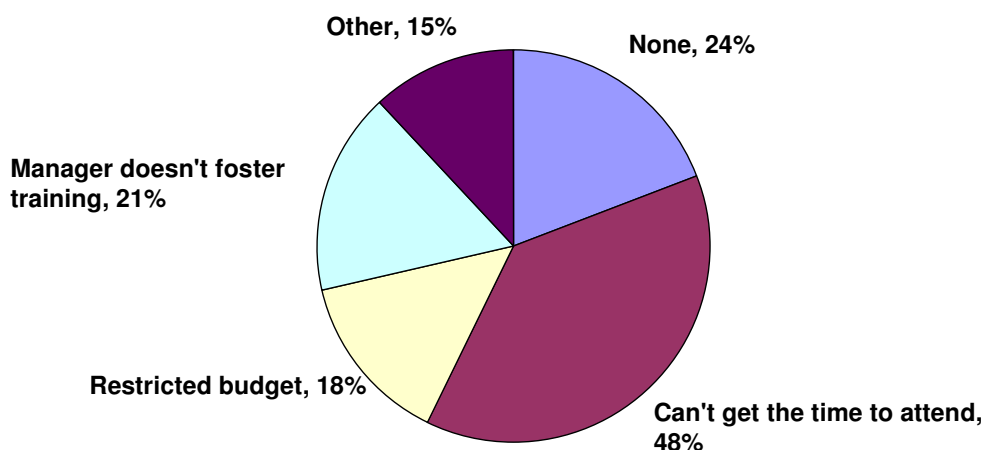
It's little surprise that automatic upgrades beyond the J4 level was rated as an important issue by 43 per cent of respondents.

*"This is a great company with so much history in producing the highest standards of journalism, and it is sad to see how management doesn't reward some of the editorial staff with the best equipment, training and pay increases that reflect their standard of work and professionalism. It seems all they care about are bonuses for executives and the shareholders!"*

## Training

Only 13 per cent of respondents said they had been trained for new roles arising from changes in technology. Obstacles to training appear to be caused by a lack of staff, with most respondents (48 per cent) saying they can't get the time to attend. Budgets and attitudes by managers were also highlighted by respondents (see graph below).

What obstacles to training, if any, exist?



We have received more than 200 suggestions for courses and other training that staff need to improve their skills and efficiency, which we will discuss in negotiations with management.

# Draft log of claims

**1. Fairfax Digital included - agreement to cover all online editorial staff.**

We need Fairfax Digital included in our agreement to ensure that their work is bound by the Alliance Code of Ethics; the staff work under comparable conditions as other Fairfax journalists; and the company won't have a non-union workforce that undermines our conditions and bargaining strength.

**2. Super A ditched – a pay rise for all.**

The company says those on \$100,000 salaries (about a third of members) should be rewarded on performance, not receive a guaranteed pay rise. This is a furphy. The anecdotal evidence is everyone gets the same payment except those members that managers want to discipline or pressure to resign. It's a bizarre proposition that to motivate its best journalists the company has them scuffle for crumbs. Fairfax printers's top salary is currently \$130,469 p.a. with payraises of 1.75% due on 28/08/08, 25/02/09 and 28/08/09.

**3. Pay rise that reflects rising productivity and increased cost of living.**

**4. Union access to the workplace.**

Our union reps to have access when and where requested by members, not barred from the editorial floor by management using John Howard's discredited IR legislation.

**5. Improved grading and promotion structure.**

A Fairfax trainee who started in May 1999 would be required by May 2008 to be graded at J4. That's nine years to reach a base salary of \$60,800. Fairfax can do better.

**6. Work intensification/staffing numbers.**

**7. Improvements to current training arrangements.**

**8. Increased super.**

Foster greater participation in salary sacrifice and/or increased employer contribution.

**9. Increased parental leave.**

We welcome the increase to 10 weeks paid maternity leave - seek same benefit for primary care givers.

**10. Carbon-neutral policy.**

**11. Increase allowances by CPI.**

**12. Maintain all other conditions.**

## Authorised meetings to endorse the log of claims will be held next week:

**Sydney and Melbourne: Wednesday, June 4, 3pm**  
**BRW Melbourne: Wednesday, June 4, 11am**  
**Newcastle and Illawarra: Thursday, June 5, 3pm**  
**Canberra: Thursday, June 5, 11am**

The next negotiation with management is set for Wednesday, June 11, in Sydney at 1.30pm.

For more information and to get involved in the campaign for better pay and conditions at Fairfax, contact your House Committee delegate or contact Alliance organisers Claire O'Rourke at [claire.orourke@alliance.org.au](mailto:claire.orourke@alliance.org.au) or 02 9333 0935 (NSW) or Jenny Farrar at [jenny.farrar@alliance.org.au](mailto:jenny.farrar@alliance.org.au) or 03 9691 7128 (Victoria).

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***Join your union [www.alliance.org.au](http://www.alliance.org.au)***

Authorised by Christopher Warren, Federal Secretary

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