

## **Unfair Fairfax proposal exposes Labor policy flaw**

**For more information contact Mark Ryan on 0412 677167  
The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain Australia**



Fairfax plans to try to strip more than 350 Fairfax journalists of their right to collectively bargain for pay rises by seizing on a loophole in the government's workplace relations policy, the Media Alliance has warned.

The Alliance, which is about to enter negotiations with Fairfax management for a new enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), said the company had deliberately chosen to exploit a conflict between the Government's "Forward with Fairness" IR policy, announced in April last year, and its implementation plan, announced in August.

"Forward with Fairness" stated that "Under Labor award coverage will not be extended to cover those who are historically award free, such as managerial employees". Three months later the implementation plan stated that "those [employees] earning above \$100,000 will be free to agree their own pay and conditions without reference to awards". This policy was to come into force by January 1, 2010.

In a letter to staff this week, Fairfax management has set out a list of bargaining positions including its assertion that employees above \$100,000 would be excluded from collective bargaining and subject to one-on-one merit reviews.

Alliance acting federal secretary, Mark Ryan, has written to Julia Gillard, deputy prime minister and the Minister for Workplace Relations, to protest Fairfax's move and to call for the Government to clarify the implementation of its workplace policy.

"The implementation plan, if put into effect, will put some 350 union members out of their award and, if the company prevails in the up-coming collective bargaining round, having to have one-on-one negotiations for their individual pay increases in a union-negotiated collective agreement. Nothing could be more bizarre or distasteful than a Labor government achieving such a result," Mr Ryan said.

Mr Ryan has requested that the Government publicly inform Fairfax management that its position is inconsistent with "Forward with Fairness". He has also requested a meeting with Ms Gillard to discuss how the proposed \$100,000 award exclusion will destroy the sort of flexibility favoured by the Alliance that has previously allowed highly paid journalists to roll up shift penalties and overtime into their base rates of pay.

"Time and time again the Alliance has demonstrated that we are willing to negotiate flexible award conditions to enable everyone the protection of a collective agreement. Fairfax is deliberately distorting a conflict between the Rudd government's stated policy and its implementation plan to isolate and remove at least 350 workers from the fundamental right to collectively bargain for pay rises. As an abrogation of fundamental Alliance principles, this is not acceptable and not something we are willing to countenance," Mr Ryan said.

*The Media Alliance represents more than 10,000 journalists across Australia*

ABN: 84 054 775 598

FEDERAL OFFICE  
245 Chalmers St  
Redfern NSW 2016

POSTAL ADDRESS  
PO Box 723  
Strawberry Hills  
NSW 2012 Australia  
Tel: [61] 2 9333 0999  
Fax: [61] 2 9333 0933

Email  
mail@alliance.org.au

Alliance Inquiry Desk  
1300 656512

Alliance Membership  
Centre 1300 656513

Website:  
www.alliance.org.au

Federal President:  
Patricia Amphlett

Federal Secretary:  
Christopher Warren