

# NATIONAL COLES MEAT UNIT UPDATE



**AMIEU**  
FEDERAL

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## Dear member,

You may have seen or heard announcements from Coles that an 'in principal agreement' has been reached for a new national meat unit agreement.

Coles caught us a little by surprise by making the announcement so soon, as we were still finalising some matters and expected to make an announcement after that.

In any event it is fair to say that an agreement will be rolled out for your consideration.

We will provide a full detailed description of the terms of that agreement in another newsletter to follow but for now we will deal with the formalities of making an agreement and what the key features of the agreement are.

As we have said in previous newsletters, it was very difficult to reach a common set of conditions from the 6 different state based arrangements around the country, and it obviously involved very complex negotiations.

## How is a national agreement different to our old arrangements?

Each state had their own agreement with Coles. In Queensland it was

an agreement covering SDA members nationally and AMIEU members in the state.

This agreement will be one single agreement for the whole country bringing all the meat unit workers together under the one agreement. It also means that if the agreement is made then all further negotiations will be done nationally, with all Coles meat unit workers across Australia voting on the approval of further agreements.

It also means that wages and conditions will be the same across the country.

## How is an agreement made?

Once the workforce has had an opportunity to read and understand the agreement, a vote will be conducted to approve it.

If the vote approves it then the agreement is made. If the vote rejects it then no agreement is made and the existing arrangements that you are on right now, including wages, continue until an agreement is made.

## What happens if the agreement is rejected?

If the vote is in the negative, then there are only three real courses of action:

1. Stay on the current terms of the old expired state based agreements
2. Apply to terminate the agreements and go back to the award system
3. Try to negotiate further with Coles

It should be noted that Coles have made clear that they have reached their final position on negotiations and to make them move from that position it will very likely be necessary to take industrial action.

This could include such things as strikes, bans, or limitations on work.

## Will some conditions be phased in or will everything apply from the start of the agreement?

Yes, there are some conditions that will be phased in but unlike the complicated store agreement 'top up' system, everything in this will only transition over a twelve month period.

What this means is that for example where a penalty rate

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returns to 25% for Saturdays, at the start it will be 20% and then move to 25% on the 12 month anniversary.

## What are the key aspects of this agreement?

### PENALTIES

This agreement will see a return to all award penalty rates. This means that:

- For any work prior to 7 am Monday to Friday, time and a half will apply.
- Saturday work will incur a 25% penalty.
- Work after 6 pm Monday to Friday will incur a 25% penalty rate.
- Sunday work will reduce to the award penalty rate, which is lower than double time, and moving down to time and a half over a period.
- However, the agreement also says that if the award penalty rates are returned to double time on Sundays (which is an ALP election promise) then that is what you will get.

Some people are receiving higher penalty rates for Saturday work in Victoria and there is a savings provision for those people that freezes the current rate.

Details of this will follow in the full explanation of the agreement in the next newsletter.

### WAGES

The hourly rates applicable at the start of the agreement are below (there are some slight variations to the following rates because of the 12 month transition but we are talking cents per hour).

<b>Manager</b>	\$29.18
<b>Butcher</b>	\$27.79
<b>Skilled non-tradesperson</b>	\$25.56
<b>Packer</b>	\$23.67

On the twelve month anniversary of the agreement you will also get a pay rise that is determined by the Fair Work Commission where those slight variations in hourly rates will come together into the same rate for each classification across the country.

We expect that increase to be around the 3% mark, but it is subject to orders of the Commission in their annual Fair Pay Determination.

### SIGN ON BONUS

On the agreement being made, each meat unit worker will be entitled to a card that gives you a tax free expenditure of \$1000 for full time workers, \$700 for part time workers and \$400 for casuals.

### MAJOR WINS

Two of the key gains for us were the maintaining of non-rostered working day benefits where you will receive the benefit of the public holiday if it falls on your non rostered day, but this is now also extended to part time workers who do 19 starts a month.

An extra holiday (what was butchers' picnic in some states) will be observed each year by meat unit workers. Where butchers picnic was already agreed, those states will simply call it something else from now on, but there were states that did not have the day and they will now get it under this agreement.

Butchers cannot be rostered outside of the meat units unless they want to. Strict rules apply to prevent coercion.

### WHAT ABOUT LOSSES?

Some states had conditions that others did not and in some cases the agreement lowers some conditions, in others it increases them. One such loss is that if

the company cannot get enough volunteers to work on public holidays then they can roster someone to do it unless there are sufficient grounds for the worker to refuse (which is complicated).

We have tried to maintain as many of the old savings provisions from all of the state based agreements as possible, but some were not accepted by Coles. Detail of all this will follow in the next newsletter.

### So now what??

The agreement will soon be available for detailed viewing by you. You will notice that it is much easier to read than older agreements and will be a lot easier to understand.

We will provide a detailed explanation of the agreement for you to cross check. This will detail all gains and losses with nothing hidden or disguised. You are also most welcome to talk to our organisers or contact the various branches of the union for further advice.

You will then get to vote on the agreement and if the vote is yes then the agreement will be made. More news to follow as soon as possible.



**Graham Smith**  
*Federal Secretary*

**Questions?** Contact your local AMIEU branch office to learn more.