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media release

for immediate release

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Attention: Chief of Staff / News Editor

BRISBANE CALL CENTRE WORKERS REJECT WORKCHOICES NON-UNION AGREEMENT

Brisbane call centre Australian Communications Exchange (ACE) workers have voted overwhelmingly to reject the company's attempt to impose a substandard WorkChoices non-union agreement on them.

The federally funded call centre, which provides telephone relay services for the Deaf Community received recent media attention after banning its workers from having an International Women's Day morning tea on the 8th March, and its subsequent attempts to decrease pay under a proposed WorkChoices Agreement despite the union's claims that it is in the state, not federal jurisdiction.

The company also attracted the attention of the federal Office of Workplace Services after workers complained of being coerced during the negotiation process. The company at the time told its predominantly female workforce that their refusal to downgrade pay and conditions in a proposed WorkChoices agreement may cost them their jobs.

In a communication to staff on Monday 5th March, Chief Executive Officer for ACE Mr Wayne Gilbert said that "The EB Committee rejected this proposal, refusing to negotiate terms which will allow ACE to remain competitive in a market where ACE may in the future be undercut by overseas competitors...As negotiations with your union have broken down, ACE now looks to you directly to ensure that your employment with ACE continues...If a replacement agreement is not made...Brisbane Relay Officers will not receive a pay rise and the long term viability of the company will be in jeopardy". The OWS has apparently chosen not to pursue the company for the statements made.

ASU Secretary Julie Bignell said " This is a very clear message to the company that our members don't want their substandard agreement. The company should now come back to the table and discuss how a suitable state based agreement can be negotiated which doesn't cut people's take-home pay. It's a waste of tax payers money for management to continue with this charade and spend big money on lawyers when they should be concentrating on rebuilding their relationship with their staff so that the deaf community can get the service they want and need."

The WorkChoices ballot was defeated soundly, with 67 voting against, and 5 voting for.

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