

Your right to bargain your pay

Towards the end of last year, PSA members in two government departments took industrial action to achieve what most of us see as a basic right - the right to bargain their pay.

For most state sector workers, the idea of **not** bargaining their pay would be inconceivable. For instance, teachers and health workers negotiate their pay scales every two or three years as an essential part of the collective agreement.

But in the core public service, most public service employers cling to the idea that they will determine your pay unilaterally, using consultants to set a "market rate" and performance bonuses that are entirely discretionary.

That was the government's line during the late eighties and nineties. But not now.

The government's expectations are set out in the bargaining parameters. These were changed in 2000 and again in 2005. They state:

"In general, the government expects that minimum pay rates will be a matter for negotiation and that, unless there is a good reason not to, these will be included in the collective agreement."

This directive is simply ignored by some public service employers.

Does it matter?

It matters because public servants are being sold short.

- Pay movements for the core public service are lagging behind those for the health and education sectors.
- The cost of living is not taken into account.
- Most departmental pay systems lack transparency and fairness.

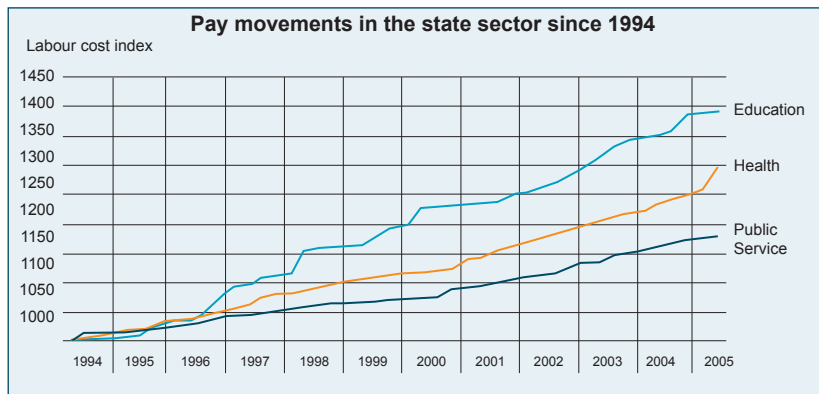
The public service is being sold short.

- Performance pay is wasteful of time and resources and does little to improve the quality of service.
- Many departments are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain staff. Pay is not keeping pace and performance pay systems leave many feeling undervalued and resentful.

Fair pay

The PSA's bottom line for pay in the public service

- The real value of pay is maintained.
- Low and unfair pay rates are targeted.
- Pay scales are bargained and ratified by members, and included in their collective agreement.
- Transparent salary progression replaces discretionary bonuses and ranges of rates.
- Performance management is uncoupled from pay and linked to career growth and development in the job.
- The "market rate" is just one of the factors to be considered when negotiating fair rates of pay.



Collective pay bargaining in the public service stopped in the early nineties.



More information

- Bargaining for decent pay, decent workplaces – the PSA public sector bargaining strategy
- Performance pay has had its day
- A Fairer Way: common employment provisions

