What's happening?
The Government has announced a six month pay freeze for APS employees. Any pay rise that is due in the next twelve months will be deferred for a six month period. The Minister responsible for the Public Service, Assistant Minister Ben Morton said the decision has been made so that the APS “helps share the economic burden” of the COVID-19 pandemic.
The decision affects any planned and future pay rises for the next 12 months, from 14 April 2020 onwards. It does not affect increments that are due.

What does the union say about this?
This is a bad decision that will hurt APS employees and their families, at a time when public servants are working harder, in critical front-line roles, to support the Australian community during the COVID-19 crisis.

What is happening to other workers?
The Queensland government has announced a pay freeze for public servants. In other public sector jurisdictions, there is discussion about a potential freeze or cut, but at this stage, that has not been announced. The federal minimum wage case is also before the Fair Work Commission, and the Government is seeking a 6 month delay on a minimum wage increase. There are various other developments across areas of the private sector, including on pay and stand downs.

What does it mean for my pay?
If you are due to receive a pay rise in the next twelve months, the Government’s determination defers the date of effect of that pay rise for 6 months. This determination does not affect subsequent pay rises.
For example, if you are due to receive your next pay increase in August 2020, you will now receive that increase in February 2021. The following two pay rises, due in August 2021 and August 2022, will be paid on those dates with no change.

What if I am currently bargaining?
The deferral will apply to any wages rises achieved in bargaining over the next six months. For example, where an enterprise agreement would usually provide for the first pay increase on commencement, the APSC will now require that the first pay rise is paid 6 months from commencement.

What about non-APS agencies?
The Assistant Minister has said that he will write to non-APS agencies to inform them of “the Government’s expectations of them to implement a 6 month deferral as well.”

How is the government doing this?
The Assistant Minister has issued a section 24(3) determination under the Public Service Act. This provision gives the Minister the power to determine the pay and conditions of APS employees and to override Enterprise Agreements or Section 24(1) Determinations made by Agency heads, in exceptional circumstances.

What can we do about it?
The Assistant Minister has made the determination. We have raised our concerns directly with Government and our objection to this decision. APS agencies that have pay rises payable under a determination now or over the next twelve months have options to instigate bargaining. We will be talking to delegates and members about how to respond in your agency.

What about bargaining?
This determination does not affect the rights of members to bargain under the Fair Work Act, where it is in their interest to do so.