



Slaters refuse to consult

Your ASU delegates had a very unsatisfactory meeting today (9th February 2018) with Slater and Gordon HR Head Carolyn Noumertzis and a representative of Korda Mentha.

The firm has a duty to consult with the union about major change and redundancies and they are refusing to talk to us or answer our questions until after March 5th 2018 when they say they will have completed discussions with a variety of unnamed principals in General Law.

We have tried to get from them what staff's options will be but they seem more concerned to finalise business sales than talk about the future of affected employees.

We know that people who are affected want to choose what they do – some people do not want to work for principals who might buy their practice. Slaters' refused to discuss anything like this with us.

Members will recall that when there was a restructure last year and many people were made redundant and offices were closed, staff and the ASU were told that this would be the only restructure and redundancies and there would be no other areas affected.

Today Slaters' human resources admitted this was untrue and that those who said this were being "optimistic".

We questioned the firm extensively last year about general law's future and the future of other offices and got those erroneous assurances.

This week's announcement also mentioned a change to the size of the commercial litigation practice. Today we asked what a smaller commercial litigation group will look like – we got blank stares and no answers.

We asked what offices will close – again all we got is that offices which are not general law offices may be targeted as well.

We asked Slaters' to rule out office closures beyond those that do general law – they would not and they would not specify anything.

There was no detail of which offices, who is affected or when it might happen.

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On pressing the company we were told around 200 people are in scope – some may be able to be redeployed, as there are 32 vacancies currently but without knowing what the vacancies are and who is in scope this means nothing. The fact is 200 people may well be redundant as Slaters’ does not want to continue with the areas of law they practice.

The Australian newspaper reported on 7th February 2018 that Slaters’ PR people told them that their general law review would not lead to “job losses or office closure”. That does not appear to be true as we understand a range of people have already been told they will be redundant.

What next?

We have no alternative other than to lodge proceedings with the Fair Work Commission. We have done this today.

Staff deserve better than this high handed approach. The founders of Slater and Gordon would expect no less.

We will hold meetings of members in the near future to keep you updated on progress.

Want more information?

If you have questions contact your local ASU organiser or delegate.

If you want to join the ASU – you can do so on line at

<https://www.asu.asn.au/asujoin>

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