

Newsagents left hanging by Bill Express

After almost 5 years' Bill Express took action in March to fully remove a series of rebates which were paid to newsagents who operated on the DialTime/Bill Express EFTPOS and electronic commerce platform.

"Newsagents were promised on a national basis, that while they operated on the Bill Express platform, these rebates would be guaranteed to ensure the platform would be cost neutral to newsagents for the life of the agreement," Australian Newsagents' Federation (ANF) CEO Don MacAskill said.

The ANF attempted to have the removal of the subsidies reversed and was rejected, causing a breakdown in the renegotiation of the agreement between Bill Express (BXP) and the ANF leading to the disintegration of the relationship.

As a result, many newsagents began to terminate their Merchant Agreements with BXP, but each agent remains subject to a separate rental agreement for the financing of the BXP package.

In April newsagents' accounts were deducted for the first time a full \$545 which is expected to continue each month where rebates from BXP had previously offset this payment.

The ANF is aware that newsagents across Australia are suspending their direct debit arrangement pending the resolution of the rebate scheme and other serious ongoing concerns with BXP.

"What we would like to see happen here is that the finance company be a good corporate citizen and do the right thing by finding a way to either discount a final settlement of the newsagents' rental agreements or releasing newsagents entirely," Don MacAskill said.

Following a succession of trading halts of BXP, a well publicised dispute with Optus and a reduction in service levels across the newsagent network, many newsagents have sought alternative suppliers for EFTPOS and electronic mobile phone recharge.

"The ANF is hoping for a speedy resolution to this issue so that newsagents are not left hanging," Don MacAskill said

"It is unfair for newsagents to continue to pay for the problems of Bill Express."

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