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More staff fired over sex romp

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Ewin Hannan | *August 14, 2007*

TELSTRA has sacked three more employees involved in an early-morning naked sex romp that occurred after they left an after-hours staff function.

And Telstra yesterday announced it would appeal against an order that it rehire and pay compensation to a fourth employee sacked for her part in the escapade.

The Australian reported yesterday that Telstra sacked Carlie Streeter in March after claiming she sexually harassed three female colleagues by having sex just metres from where they were sleeping on a hotel-room floor.

Telstra said Ms Streeter had also sexually harassed a female colleague because she was naked in the hotel bath with two male employees in the presence of the woman.

A Telstra spokeswoman revealed yesterday the two male employees -- sales officer Aakash Sharma and store manager Steve Hatzistergos -- had been sacked, along with a female employee it refused to name.

"As a result of our investigation into this incident, three other employees (as well as Ms Streeter) were dismissed for inappropriate behaviour," the spokeswoman said.

The complaints arose after an evening staff gathering in February when four of the employees had planned to stay overnight at a Cronulla hotel in Sydney's south.

The Industrial Relations Commission on Friday upheld Ms Streeter's claim that she had been unjustly sacked.

The commission said most of the conduct occurred well away from the workplace after, rather than during, a work function, and in a hotel room that was booked and paid for privately.

It said that although the employees were upset by Ms Streeter's conduct, it was not enough to constitute sexual harassment.

It ruled that the sexual conduct took place in a hotel room, with the lights out, in the early hours of the morning, when Ms Streeter thought the other employees were asleep.

Telstra was ordered to re-employ Ms Streeter at another shop and pay compensation equal to any remuneration lost as a result of her sacking.

But the Telstra spokeswoman said yesterday the corporation intended to appeal against the decision.

In its evidence to the commission, Telstra argued that Ms Streeter's conduct occurred in a work-related context. It said the employees would not have been in the hotel room together had it not been for the belated Christmas party function, which was funded by Telstra.

It said the sexual intercourse engaged in by Ms Streeter was clearly not welcome to the three female colleagues because it was close to them and would have been anticipated by a reasonable person to have "offended, humiliated or intimidated them".

But Ms Streeter, through her lawyer, said the function was more in the nature of a party organised by a junior employee for a group of fellow workers than a work-related function.

She said there was no evidence that Telstra management was aware of the hotel booking, and that the room was a "private booking with no connection to Telstra at all".

Her lawyer said her conduct in having sex with Mr Sharma was not directed to anyone else in the room, no-one in the room told her the conduct was unwelcome, the lights were off and she thought everyone else was asleep.

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