SIAG Pty Ltd MARCH 2014

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in this edition

Page 1	Federal Government introduces Fair Work amendment bill into Parliament	Page 6	Federal O direction
Page 2	Fair Work Commission releases statistics on bullying	Page 7	Queensla
Page 3	Sacking for sending facebook message found to be unfair	Page 8	Federal (
Page 4	Fair Work Commission finds that a sacked employee was not unfarily dismissed when the employer failed to redeploy them	Page 9	Full bence not an ad
Page 5	Fair Work Commission finds that there was no valid reason for employee	Page 10	Fair Wor
	to be sacked after taking milo home	Page 11	Health a

Page 6 Federal Court finds that jetstar ignored warnings against unlawful directions

 Age 7
 Queensland government proposes changes to OHS legislation

Page 8 Federal Court fines business \$41,500 for adverse action against employee Page 9 Full bench of the Fair Work Commission confirms that a support person is not an advocate

2e 10 Fair Work Commission rules on retrospectivity of bullying jurisdiction

ge 11 Health and Safety Representative Initial OHS Course (5 Days)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES FAIR WORK AMENDMENT BILL INTO PARLIAMENT

On the 27 February 2014 The Federal Government has introduced the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014 into Parliament and includes proposed changes to expand the subject matter of individual flexibility agreements (IFA), amendments to greenfield agreement negotiations and requiring bargaining before protected industrial action.

Under the proposed changes employers and employees will be able to make IFA's to cover arrangements about when work is performed, overtime rates, penalty rates, allowances and leave loading. The amendments will also allow for unilateral termination only upon 13 weeks notice (The current termination notice is 28 days), and will include an amended note at S144 (4) to make it clear that in considering whether an employee is better off overall under the IFA's, benefits other than a payment of money may be taken into account.

The amendments to the IFA's require that employees who enter into such an arrangement will now be required to give a written statement that indicates why they believe IFA's under a Modern Award or enterprise agreement meets their needs and leaves them better off.

Other proposed changes to the Fair Work Act (FWA) include a requirement that an application for a protected action ballot order will not be able to be made until the employer is obliged to give employees notice of representational rights in bargaining. This reverses the effect of the decision of the Full Federal Court in *JJ Richards and Sons Pty Ltd v Fair Work Australia 2012.* The reversal of the JJ Richards decision means that before the Fair Work Commission can order a ballot, the employer must have initiated bargaining, agreed

to bargain or the union must have obtained a majority support determination.

The Amendment Bill also proposes that the National Employment Standards will require annual leave on termination of employment to be paid out at the base rate of pay. The amendment also makes clear that annual leave loading is only payable on termination of employment if it's contained in an agreement or award. Further changes to the FWA will prevent employees from accruing or taking annual leave while on workers' compensation.

The Fair Work Amendment Bill also adopts numerous Fair Work Review Panel recommendations including requiring an employer to discuss any request from an employee to extend their unpaid parental leave under s76 of the Act and remove the requirement for a transfer of business order where an employee voluntarily moves between associated employers.

Further the Amendment Bill proposes streamlining the process in relation to dismissal of unfair dismissal applications by the Fair Work Commission (FWC). The FWC will no longer be required to hold a hearing or conference when considering whether to dismiss an unfair dismissal application under section 399A or section 587 of the Act. The FWC must first invite relevant parties to provide further information that relates to whether the FWC should exercise its power to dismiss and consider that information before exercising that power.

The proposed Amendment Bill omits a number of changes that were indicated in the Coalition's Industrial Relations policy before the Federal election including

requiring bullying applicants to first go to an independent regulator before seeking FWC orders and requiring that before approval of an enterprise agreement, the FWC must be satisfied that the parties discussed productivity in their negotiations.

The Explanatory Memorandum indicates that there will be a Senate inquiry into the Amendment Bill and that the proposed changes to the Fair Work Act will be reviewed as part of the "Productivity Commission review of the workplace relations framework" which is scheduled to commence this year. The Amendment Bill is unlikely to be passed until after 30 June 2014 when the new Senate sits. SIAG will be hosting to breakfast seminars two discuss the proposed Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014 on 8 April 2014 in Melbourne and 11 April 2014 in Sydney. For further information please contact the SIAG office.

Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014, Explanatory Memorandum, Minister for Employment, Senator the Honourable Eric Abetz, 27 February 2014

FAIR WORK COMMISSION RELEASES STATISTICS ON BULLYING

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has received 44 complaints since the new bullying jurisdiction commenced on 1 January 2014. The Tribunal's president, however, has been quick to state that this should not be used as a guide to predict the future rate of applications. Justice Ian Ross noted that both January and February "traditionally see a smaller number of lodgements with the Commission".

FWC stated that it had dealt with the applications within the 14 day period as required by the Act, and that some applications had already been dealt with by a Tribunal member, while at least 6 applications had been withdrawn during the preliminary assessment process.

Justice Ross said that although it is still early days,

the process for dealing with applications is fulfilling its intention of engaging with parties early and "progressing matters promptly and in a practical, efficient and fair manner".

Further statistics will be released in the regular quarterly FWC report.

Media Release, Fair Work Commission release first anti-bullying statistics, Fair Work Commission 5 February 2014



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SACKING FOR SENDING FACEBOOK MESSAGE FOUND TO BE UNFAIR

The Fair Work Commission has found that a HR Manager who was sacked for sending a private Facebook message to her boss's estranged wife was unfairly dismissed.

The HR Manager who had been employed by the car company and the principal's wife had been good friends and had been in contact following the wife's discovery that her husband had been having an affair. The Principal (the respondent) had informed his managers, including the HR Manager that no confidential information about the business could be provided to his estranged wife. The HR Manager had sent a private Facebook message to the wife stating that the principal was not popular with his employees and that one of her colleagues had called him a "tosser."

The respondent accessed his wife's Facebook page and had seen the message from the HR Manager. On August 5, 2013, the principal gave the HR manager a letter in which he outlined "areas of concern" with her employment, including that she had discussed work matters in the Facebook message, had disclosed confidential information and had breached the standard of trust and confidence. At a meeting on 7 August 2013, the respondent summarily dismissed the HR Manager. Whilst the HR Manager had accepted that the company's social media policy did state that employees should not make derogatory comments about the company, colleagues, customers or suppliers on the internet, she argued during the hearing that she did not believe that the policy related to private emails and personal and confidential chats.

The principal had also argued that after giving directions to his managers that there was to be no communication with his estranged wife, the HR Manager had spent half an hour talking to her on the phone. Commissioner Deegan found that whilst the principal had given directions not to divulge confidential information to his wife, there was no evidence that the HR Manager had breached this direction and the Commissioner could not find any circumstance in which an employer would be allowed to prohibit an employee from contacting another person merely because a senior manager had some personal issues with the other person. Further, Commissioner Deegan, found that the Facebook conversation was not such a serious breach of confidentiality as to justify termination of the applicant's employment. Commissioner Deegan found that in all circumstances the comments made by the applicant in a private conversation were not sufficient to justify the termination of the applicant's employment. Commissioner Deegan stated that "I do not think discovery by a manager that an employee holds a low opinion of him is sufficient reason to terminate the employment of a long serving employee with an impeccable employment record."

Commissioner Deegan concluded that the dismissal was harsh, unjust and unreasonable and there was no evidence of any conduct on the part of the HR Manager that could have justified summary dismissal. Whilst the HR Manager sought reinstatement, Commissioner Deegan found that due to the exacerbation and break down in the relationship between the applicant and the Principal, reinstatement was inappropriate and awarded the HR Manager an amount equal to the amount earned by the applicant during the 26 weeks immediately before the dismissal.

This case raises important questions on what is viewed as public and private when it comes to social media and social media policies in the workplace.

Wilkinson-Reed v Launtoy Pty Ltd T/A Launceston Toyota (2014) FWC 644 (24 January 2014).



FAIR WORK COMMISSION FINDS THAT A SACKED EMPLOYEE WAS NOT UNFARILY DISMISSED WHEN THE EMPLOYER FAILED TO REDEPLOY THEM

A full bench of the Fair Work Commission has upheld an appeal by TAFE NSW against an unfair dismissal decision by Commissioner McKenna in which she found that the TAFE NSW sacking of an employee was not a "genuine redundancy."

The full bench examined the issue of whether Commissioner McKenna's decision in relation to s 389 (2) acted upon a wrong principle when considering that subsection. Section 389 (2) states:

> "(2) A person's dismissal was not a case of genuine redundancy if it would have been reasonable in all the circumstances for the person to be redeployed within:

- (a) the employer's enterprise; or
- (b) the enterprise of an associated entity of the employer."

Commissioner McKenna had found that examination of redeployment options within the employer's enterprise was unreasonably constrained by an abstract, policy-specified meaning of redeployment and that the employee's dismissal was not a case of genuine redundancy.

The Full Bench considered whether there must be an identified job or position to which the applicant could have been redeployed, identify the circumstances in which the employee could be redeployed, and determine whether the redeployment to a "particular job" was reasonable in the circumstances. The respondent, TAFE NSW, contended that it is not necessary to identify a

particular job or position to which the employee could have been redeployed. TAFE NSW submitted that it is significant that section 389 (2) does not refer to redeployment to a specific "position" or "job."

The respondent argued that because Section 389 (2) refers to redeployment "within the employer's enterprise" or "the enterprise of an associated entity of the employer" there is no basis for limiting the concept of redeployment by requiring the Commission to identify a specific position to which the employee should have redeployed. TAFE NSW contended that the context of s.389 does not support such a narrow interpretation.

The Full Bench ruled that Commissioner McKenna's unfair dismissal finding against TAFE NSW "erroneously focused on the inadequacy of its redeployment policy and failed to make a finding that there was a job, position or other work to which the employee could have been redeployed."

The Full Bench found that the failure to make a finding that there was a job, a position or other work to which the employee could have been redeployed was an error that warranted correction on appeal. The Full Bench upheld the appeal, quashed Commissioner McKenna's decision and orders, sent the matter to her to determine the unfair dismissal claim in accordance with the full bench's decision.

Technical and Further Education Commission T/A TAFE NSW v L.Pykett, FWC, 29 January 2014



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FAIR WORK COMMISSION FINDS THAT THERE WAS NO VALID REASON FOR EMPLOYEE TO BE SACKED AFTER TAKING MILO HOME

The Fair Work Commission has found that Coles had no valid reason to sack an employee because he had been taking home Milo supplied by the company to staff.

Coles had provided Milo to employees on their breaks at their Adelaide warehouse and the worker regularly took some of the Milo home to mix with his own drinking chocolate, coffee and raw sugar. The employee would then bring the mix back to work and keep it in his locker, placing it in a thermos with hot water to drink during breaks.

Coles management were informed on 30 August 2013 that the employee had been seen spooning Milo into a container and placing it in his bag. At the end of the day, security searched the employee and found the Tupperware container with the milo mix in it. When confronted with the mix, the employee stated that he had bought the container from home. The employee was subsequently suspended pending an investigation.

On 10 September 2013, the employee attended an interview with a support person. The employee advised management that the Milo was from the lunchroom and that he had advised the security guard that it was his own because he was in shock at the line of questioning. The employee explained how he had mixed his own drink by taking Milo home and mixing it with other ingredients. At the meeting, Coles management advised the employee that he was to be summarily dismissed for serious and wilful misconduct.

The employee submitted to the Fair Work Commission (FWC), that his behaviour did not represent a valid reason for the termination of his employment and that the termination of employment was harsh and disproportionate to the nature of his conduct.

Further the employee asserted that the termination of employment process was inherently flawed as the investigation failed to attempt to establish the employees' intentions with respect to the use of the Milo and that there was no evidence of any deliberate attempt on the employees' part to mislead Coles.

Coles however maintained that the employee inappropriately used its resources and took its property

by taking the Milo and further engaged in dishonest and misleading conduct when he said the Milo was his. Further Coles asserted that the employees' conduct breached its employee Code of Conduct and that its decision to terminate the employee was based on a valid reason given the significance it attached to theft and employee compliance with the Code.

Senior Deputy President Matthew O'Callaghan was told that the employee had forgotten to take some Milo home with him on August 29, so he had brought his own ingredients to work with him the following day. After adding Milo from the lunchroom to his container, he had inadvertently put it back into his bag instead of his locker.

Senior Deputy President Matthew O'Callaghan concluded that in the circumstances, the employee's actions in taking home the container filled with Milo did not represent a valid reason for the termination of his employment. Senior Deputy President O'Callaghan said that the evidence before him clearly indicated that the employee was using the Milo for the purpose for which it was intended. Whilst he concluded that the employee should not have taken the Milo home, his actions did not represent theft or inappropriate behaviour which could form a valid reason for termination of his employment, let alone summary dismissal.

Senior Deputy President O'Callaghan found that whilst the employee was given an opportunity to respond to the proposed termination of his employment, he was not satisfied that the employee's response was given significant weight or subject to any investigation. Whilst Senior Deputy President O'Callaghan said that Coles had legitimate concerns about inappropriate use of its resources, he acknowledged that even if he had found that the employee's actions represented a valid reason for the termination of employment, the summary dismissal was inconsistent with the inadvertent behaviour by the employee. Senior Deputy President O'Callaghan concluded that the termination of employment was harsh and unfair and ordered reinstatement.

Gary Homes v Coles Group Ltd T/A Coles Warehouse Edinburgh Parks, Fair Work Commission, 10 February 2014

FEDERAL COURT FINDS THAT JETSTAR IGNORED WARNINGS AGAINST UNLAWFUL DIRECTIONS

The Federal Court has found that Jetstar unlawfully deducted training costs from the wages of cadet pilots despite warnings that these would be unlawful deductionss. The allegations were brought against Jetstar Airways Pty Ltd by the Fair Work Ombudsman who claimed that Jetstar had breached the *Air Pilots Award 2010*.

An external IR consultant had advised Jetstar management that under the "applicable modern award you must pay award rates and the employer becomes responsible for the cost of required training", following the discovery that cadet pilot's training costs would be recovered via salary sacrifice. Jetstar responded by employing the cadets through Jetstar New Zealand, under individual employment agreements with the training costs to be paid by the cadets. The six cadet pilots were informed that due to restrictions imposed by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, they would now be based in Australia. The head of flying operations and resources, in an email to the head of people stated that "we may have cost ourselves the value of their in flight training (42 K) per cadet as the modern award does not permit a prospective employer to charge for training."

The six cadets were then offered employment by Jetstar Group pursuant to a written contract. Under Clause 16.5 of the relevant Modern Award Jetstar was required to reimburse the cadet pilots for at least the cost of line training to which they were subject.

Justice Buchanan said that Jetstar Airways Pty Ltd and its subsidiary Jetstar Group Pty Ltd had proceed with unlawful conduct "notwithstanding advice (the substance of which is now accepted) that what they were proposing to do, and did do so, was contrary to the Modern Award and the Fair Work Act."

Jetstar had deducted a total of \$17,500 over four months from the wages of the six cadet pilots involved in the case. The Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP) had commenced proceedings against Jetstar Group, alleging that Jetstar Group contravened or proposed to contravene clauses of the Award. Jetstar returned the money following AFAP's legal challenge. Justice Buchanan said that Jetstar used its "vastly superior bargaining power" to "effectively brush aside any resistance from the cadet pilots, not desisting until the AFAP stepped in." Justice Buchanan awarded penalties of \$45,000 on the two Jetstar entities and said that whilst it "will doubtless have little serious impact" on the companies, it would go "a little way" toward ensuring the risk of punishment is not seen as an acceptable cosy for doing business.

FAIR WORK OMBUDSMAND V JETSTAR AIRWAYS LTD (2014) FCA 33 (6 FEBRUARY 2014)



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QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT PROPOSES CHANGES TO OHS LEGISLATION

The Queensland Government has proposed changes to state occupational health and safety legislation including stopping Queensland health and safety representatives from halting unsafe work and will require union officials to give 24 hours written notice before entering workplaces to investigate safety breaches.

The Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 was introduced into Queensland Parliament on 13 February 2014 with Queensland Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie stating that the Bill will prevent unions from using "loopholes in the system to force their way onto worksites and lock workers out."

Amendments to the *Work Health and Safety Act* (*Queensland*) include the following:

- Amending section 119 of the Work Health and Safety Act to require Workplace Health and Safety entry permit holders to give at least 24 hours notice and outline any suspected safety contraventions before entering a workplace;
- Health and Safety representatives will lose the power to direct workers to cease unsafe work, but will be able to issue provisional improvement notices
- Queensland will be able to approve, vary or revoke WHS Codes of Practice without consulting Safe Work Australia.
- Provides maximum fines for entry permit holders

who breach the entry provisions will be doubled to more than \$20,000.

Attorney General Bleijie said that the change would ensure "Workplace Health and Safety Queensland was the first port of call for workers with safety concerns." Mr Bleijie also called for the other harmonised states and territories to adopt the rule.

The Queensland Council of Unions said the amendments would enable "those who want to cut corners to use this as an opportunity to hide health and safety issues."

Attorney General Bleijie released a statement after introducing the legislation into Queensland Parliament stating that workplace health and safety officers had responded to 57 right of entry disputes since July 2011 but had found that the majority of safety issues raised were not immediate or of an imminent risk to workers.

Whilst the Bill has been put before a Parliamentary Review Panel, the Queensland Government is under no obligation to take any of its recommendations on board.

Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, Queensland Government

Worksafe Victoria



Health and Safety Representative Intial OHS Training Course

conduct inspections - assess risks -identify hazards - investigate incidents - maintain records - know codes & standards

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FEDERAL COURT FINES BUSINESS \$41,500 FOR ADVERSE ACTION AGAINST EMPLOYEE

The Federal Court has fined AJR Nominees Pty Ltd and its director for taking adverse action against an employee after they pressured him to resign following his disclosure that he had been diagnosed with blood cancer.

Justice John Gilmour in his ruling last year said that the company and the director had been motivated by wanting to avoid the workers' accrued sick leave entitlement. In his penalty ruling on 24 February 2014, Justice Gilmour said that courts now "regard more seriously any contravention of industrial laws than has generally been the case in the past."

The employee had told his employer that he had blood cancer in December 2010 and following this disclosure the Director of AJR Nominees Pty Ltd pressured the employee to resign from his employment. The employee had received an application form for a disability support pension from Centrelink, by post, after phoning his employer to ask for some documents to support the application for pension, the employee and the director had an argument in which the employee was dismissed from his job. The following day the Director sent numerous text messages asserting that the employee had resigned.

In considering the case, Justice Gilmour found that the Director had wanted the employee to resign so that the he would not have to pay him in relation to his personal leave entitlement. Records had shown that the employee was entitled to over 500 hours of sick (personal) leave. The employer had dismissed the employees' assertion that he was sick. The employee was about to start chemotherapy, but instead of receiving the sick pay that he had accumulated, he was dismissed and paid nothing. The Director claimed that the employee had resigned. Justice Gilmour said that "there was no termination pay in lieu of notice, because the director wanted to maintain the façade of resignation rather than dismissal."

Justice Gilmour in his penalty ruling said that the "workplace right sought to be protected in this case were fundamental."

Further Justice Gilmour said that a higher penalty was warranted as the employer undertook a deliberate strategy, further the Director's character was undermined by "his serious criminal record", involving dishonesty offences under the Western Australian Criminal Code in 2008.

Justice Gilmour set the penalties at \$14,000 each for the company and \$2,500 each for the director, the judge further fined the company \$4,500 for the pay in lieu of notice breach and \$2,500 for failure to pay annual leave and the director \$1,000 and \$500 respectively for the same contraventions.

Fair Work Ombudsman v AJR Nominees Pty Ltd (No 2) [2014] FCA 128



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FULL BENCH OF THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION CONFIRMS THAT A SUPPORT PERSON IS NOT AN ADVOCATE

A full bench of the Fair Work Commission has confirmed that the obligation for employers to let employees bring a support person with them to any discussion that could lead to dismissal does not extend to allowing that person to be an advocate. The full bench overturned a ruling by Commissioner John Ryan that an executive director was constructively dismissed.

The full bench consisting of Senior Deputy President Jennifer Acton, Deputy President Reg Hamilton and Commissioner Wayne Blair found that Commissioner Ryan had wrongly concluded that the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) had denied its executive director procedural fairness when it directed her to attend a meeting to discuss the allegations of misconduct and poor performance.

In December 2012, VATE's president wrote to the executive inviting her to attend a meeting to discuss her performance and conduct, without providing particulars of the allegations against her. The letter said she could bring a support person with her if she wished and stated "Please note that the role of the support person is to provide you with emotional support. The support person is not to act as your advocate and should not speak on your behalf. The executive had responded that she could not attend the scheduled meeting due to a prior commitment and that she would be in touch.

The President wrote back, indicating that her response was unreasonable as the organisation had given her sufficient notice to attend the meeting and said that the executive director was required to attend and failure to do so would be deemed as a failure to follow a lawful and reasonable direction by the employer.

The executive provided a lengthy response and suggested that any review of her performance be conducted by an independent consultant. VATE was prepared to adopt the executives' course of action and attached an agenda for the meeting containing 14 specific claims of misconduct or poor performance. The executive resigned the following day indicating that the process that VATE was taking was "simply a sham" and that the result of the "review" was premeditated.

Commissioner Ryan in his decision said that VATE's approach was not one of procedural fairness to the executive, citing failure to disclose the material and the refusal to allow the executive to have an advocate.

The Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission in considering Commissioner Ryan's decision found that s 387 (d) of the Fair Work Act referred to a "support person" and there was no other obligation in the legislation to allow for an advocate. The full bench found that given that there was an absence of any other obligation to allow for an advocate, we do not think a refusal by VATE to allow an advocate at the meeting can be regarded as constituting an element of procedural unfairness."

The full bench said Commissioner Ryan's decision was "affected by significant error." The full bench found that there was no evidence that the executive was effectively instructed to resign by VATE in the face of threatened or impending dismissal."

The full bench ruled that they were satisfied that the executive was not forced to resign because of conduct, or a course of conduct engaged in by VATE. Commissioner Ryan's decision was quashed and the executive's unfair dismissal claim remedy application was dismissed.

Victorian Association for the Teaching of English Inc v Debra de Laps, 19 January 2014

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has ruled that it can consider behaviour that occurred before the start of the new bullying jurisdiction on January 1 this year when dealing with applications for orders to stop the conduct.

The FWC rejected claims by the employer Peninsula Support Services that considering past conduct would give the legislation retrospective operation. The case involved an employee who applied to the FWC for an order to prevent her from being bullied at work. The employee alleged that she was subjected to bullying behaviour over a six year period commencing in November 2007 through to May 2013. The applicant does not refer to any bullying behaviour since May 2013.

Section 789 FD of the Fair Work Act deals with when a worker is "bullied at work":

- (1) A worker is bullied at work if:
- (a) While the worker is at work in a constitutionally covered business:
 - (i) An individual; or
 - (ii) A group of individuals;

Repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards the worker, or a group of workers of which the worker is a member; and

(b) That behaviour creates a risk to health and safety.

Peninsula Support Services had relied on the present tense in s.789 FD, in particular the expression "while the worker is at work" to support its submission that a worker can only be bullied at work from a point in time when the legal characterisation of "bullying" was in force, that is on and from 1 January 2014.

However, the FWC argued that the reference to "is at work" in s789 FD (1) provides a context in which the bullying took place and that the alleged bullying behaviour must take place prior to the making of an application for an order. The bench stressed that the orders to stop bullying operate prospectively and were aimed at stopping a worker from being bullied at work.

The Full Bench however noted that the provisions in the Fair Work Amendment Act 2013 was silent on whether an application for an order can be based on bullying behaviour that has occurred prior to January 1.

The Full Bench remitted the employee's matter to Commissioner Hampton to determine whether there was any risk that she would be continued to be bullied at work under s789 F.

McInnes v Peninsula Support Services Inc t/as Peninsula Support Services (PSS), Fair Work Commission [2014] 1440, 6 March 2014



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Health and Safety Representative Initial OHS Training Course

siag is offering the 5 day Health and Safety Representative Initial OHS Training Course across a range of industries. The program is interactive, informative and gives an understanding of the OHS imperatives of this role.

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- ~ Interpreting the occupational health and safety legislative framework and its relationship to the HSR
- ~ Identifying key parties and their legislative obligations and duties
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- ~ Participating in consulting and issue resolution
- Represent designated work group members in any OHS risk management process undertaken by appropriate duty holder/s
- Issuing a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) and directing the cessation of work.

Entitlement

Under the OHS Act 2004 (section 67) all elected HSRs and deputy HSRs are entitled to undertake WorkSafe Victoria approved OHS training for HSRs and choose their training provider in consultation with their employer. SIAG is approved to deliver the HSR Initial OHS Training Course.

Under section 67 of the Victorian OHS Act 2004 an emploter, if requested, must allow an elected HSR and elected Deputy HSR to attend a WorkSafe approved HSR Initial OHS Training Course on paid time, pay the cost of the course and any other associated costs. Section 67 also allows HSRs to choose the approved training course they attend in consultation with the employer.

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Cost: \$790 plus GST per person

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For expressions of interest, fill in the form below.

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