

Australian Services Union Local Government & Energy Delegates Conference 2020

“COVID AND BEYOND - Well Paid, Secure & Safe Jobs”

Handling Objections on Occupational Health & Safety

AIR QUALITY

Objection - The air is only like this on certain days of the year, why do we need a clause for these times.

Response - Air Quality affects different people in different ways. There are also several factors that can affect Air Quality. As we have seen recently, the smoke from bushfires polluted the clean air for several hundreds of kilometres, even in areas where there was no fire, causing breathing problems for a variety of people. Similarly, during spring is not the only time that people have reactions to hay fever. For some, this can be a year long problem. By enacting an overarching clause, we can cover all scenarios for all instances.

Objection – We are a small employer, we don’t have the resources to undertake such measures

Response – Occupational Health and Safety is everybody’s responsibility. It is up to the Employer to take all precautions to provide staff with a safe working environment. By working with elected HSR’s to develop proper policy and procedure, employers can eliminate costly measures in the event of a mishap.

EXCESSIVE HEAT

Objection – It is always hot here during summer, if we agree to this, no work will get done

Response – Whilst understanding that there are different climates in different work areas, and some people have a higher tolerance for working in Excessive Heat, we need to ensure the Health and Safety of staff is paramount. By working with elected HSR’s to implement proper policies and procedures, clear guidelines and understandings will be adopted to ensure no one is put at risk. It will also mandate regular breaks to help staff “self-manage” during days of excessive heat. A clear policy also leaves staff with autonomy to properly look after their own well-being.

Objection – My colleague and I have different tolerance to heat

Response – People react differently to all situations. If we have proper policies and procedures in place that cover these differences, everybody’s individual needs should be able to be met. Everyone has the right to be safe at work. It should not just be physical hazards that we are guarding against.

NATURAL DISASTER LEAVE

Objection – There is already enough leave provided, why can’t staff use that

Response – Leave already provided falls under the category of Personal, Annual or Long Service. These are specific leave types for different situations i.e., illness, caring responsibilities, rest and recreation and for a genuine break after working at an employer for an extended period of time. Natural disaster leave is another specific type of leave that is to be used in circumstances that are beyond the control of employees; leave that does not fit in to any of the aforementioned categories. An employee caught in a natural disaster should not be made to use leave that is designed for other purposes.



By your side