



Local Authorities Newsletter September 2010

Brimbank City Council employees rally over OHS issues

OHS representatives, ASU delegates and members at Brimbank City Council held rallies in June and July as fears continued to grow over their health and safety in the workplace.

According to ASU's OHS Officer Russell McGregor, the Council have refused to meet with employees and the ASU regarding issues surrounding protective clothing, heat illness, and medical practitioner's opinions supplied by employees.

"The ASU called on the CEO to meet with the union to establish a memorandum of understanding between the parties on OHS matters. The ASU also asked for a commitment from Council that employees have the option to determine (on any given day depending on the temperature and their own acclimatisation) which combination of sun smart preventatives suits them in their current working environment. This compliments the OHS Act 2004 and ensures the health and safety and well being of all employees."

"After three months of campaigning, Brimbank Council finally met with us, but Council still tried to hold their line that they are looking after their employees by not allowing them to have the option of suitable clothing that suits their acclimatisation on any given day."

Council's position was to introduce a pro forma, and at the request of Council, this pro forma was to be taken to the employees' medical practitioner for the purpose of releasing employees' private records to Council to establish the reasons surrounding medical conditions relating to heat stress. This, according to Russell, has lead to angst among workers at the Council.

"The previous practice was that Council requested employees to seek a medical exemption for any items of clothing that was not practicable to wear on any given day. This process worked well



for many years, but unfortunately Council have upset employees by demanding them to seek a second opinion from Council's preferred medical practitioner. This blatant intrusion to seek employees' personal, private and confidential medical information is a disgrace."

As a result of a meeting on July 22 with ASU members, the following resolution was unanimously endorsed by members.

As employees we are not legally bound to seek second opinions from Council's preferred medical practitioner. Therefore we strongly reject Council's position regarding this matter, including producing certificates on a three-monthly basis. However, we will continue to provide Council, upon request, medical exemptions from our own certified medical practitioner, for the sole purpose of protective clothing.

More news on this ongoing issue as it comes to hand.

SISTER 2 SISTER PROGRAM

The idea of the sister to sister mentoring program is to encourage leadership of women in the union movement by matching experienced female union members and delegates with those less experienced in the same or across workplaces.

WE WANT YOU TO GET ON BOARD!

If you wish to participate in this program, either as a 'Sister Mentor' or 'Sister Mentee', please contact Maria Kaplanis on (03) 9342 3410 or via email mkaplanis@asuvic.com

FORTHCOMING TRAINING DATES ARE 5TH MAY & 15TH SEPTEMBERS.



Frankston City Council staff protest, win four per cent on EBA

Workers at Glen Eira Council accept three-year EBA offer

ASU members at Glen Eira Council took to the streets in May, clearly showing their thoughts on the Council's original EBA offer during the negotiation process, eventually receiving a 3.8 per cent pay rise (or \$38, whichever was the greater), per annum over the next three years.

The Australian Services Union and its members also held a BBQ outside the Glen Eira Council Civic Centre in June after management's disappointing low pay increase offer to Glen Eira Council workers during EBA negotiations. Like their counterparts at Frankston City Council, members dressed up as monkeys to highlight that they were getting paid peanuts.

ASU Organiser Lita Gillies believes that it was about time employees of the Council got paid accordingly for the quality services they provide to those in the area.

"The Glen Eira Council were happy to receive awards and kudos for all the hard work their

employees carry out, but they didn't seem to want to reward their employees for maintaining excellent standards in service to the ratepayers and the community. ASU members - who helped put Glen Eira's name up in lights as one of the leading Councils in the state - were sick of Council's attitude towards them when it came to pay and conditions."

"All the workers wanted was a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and Glen Eira employees work extremely hard to offer ratepayers the very best service they can. Once Council came back with an offer that wasn't acceptable, we as a union were willing to do whatever it took to reach an outcome members were happy with."

"I think the pay increase over the next three years is a fair one. What is more pleasing is that ASU members are really keen to increase union membership over the next three years so that they can have a big tilt at an even better outcome during the next EBA."

Frankston City Council employees took to the streets in protest in late May due to Council's Industrial Relations Consultant (and ex-Frankston City Council Organisational Development Manager) Peter Blood originally refusing to negotiate towards a better pay increase for staff.

ASU Organiser Lita Gillies said that after lengthy negotiations and the members' ability to stick together to reach their goals, a favourable EBA result was the outcome.

"Members protested with monkey masks and peanuts to show their contempt at the Council's stance that they would not offer any more than a 3.5 per cent wage increase per annum over the next three years. To the members' credit, they rallied hard and finally the Council put up an offer of four per cent or \$38 a week, whichever was the greater of the two. That is a great result because the Council had previously stated that they were not willing to budge after their original offer."

"For Council to originally offer its employees the same increase as has been offered in better paying Councils was a slap in the face to the employees who work extremely hard to offer ratepayers the very best service they can. It was time for Council to put their hands in their pocket and show that they appreciate all the hard work their employees do."

Lita also announced another resolution from the EBA which will help ensure the strength of the union within the Council over the coming years.

"The ASU members also voted to spend the next three years building up the membership and raising the profile of the union within the organisation, which can only mean even more bargaining power when negotiations for the next EBA begin."

Delegate Profile



Andre Dumitriu

How long have you been a delegate?
I have been a delegate at Hume City Council for approximately six months. Before that I was interested in union issues and assisted delegates wherever and whenever I could.

What made you become a delegate?
Over the years I had seen a number of incidents of workplace injustice and unfairness that I felt needed to be redressed. This coupled with words of Edmund Burke - "All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing" - made me decide that I needed to become actively involved. Becoming a delegate seemed a logical step as it provided me with an avenue to work towards

a more equitable workplace. I also realised that becoming a delegate would enable me to develop a range of skills and understandings that would make me a much better advocate for important issues.

Why do you think it is important workers join the union?
I believe that unions are an integral part of the social justice equation. Individuals need assistance to ensure that their rights and privileges are respected and maintained and unions play a vital role in working towards both social and individual equity and fairness. By joining a union, workers are adding their voice to trying to achieve a fairer society and are assisting an organisation that has their best interests at heart. Union members are contributing to an association that aims to protect the rights of not only themselves but their colleagues.