

Management Matters

Australian Government Announces Workplace Relations Reform Package

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On 9th October, details of the Federal Government's workplace reform plans were released. The reform package contains many changes to the current system including:

- A national industrial relations system
- The establishment of the Australian Fair Pay Commission
- The development of the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard which will encompass statutory minimum conditions of employment
- Simplification of Awards
- Changes to the processes for making Agreements
- The establishment of the Award Review taskforce
- Changes to unfair dismissal laws (including exemptions for employers with less than 100 employees)
- The creation of the Office of Workplace Services which will be responsible for monitoring compliance with minimum standards.



The reform implementation is planned to occur over a five-year period. The Australian Fair Pay and Condition Standard will ensure that minimum conditions will be protected by legislation. These include annual leave, personal/carers leave, parental leave, maximum ordinary hours and minimum wages as set by the Fair Pay Commission.

Annual Leave - Employees will receive four weeks annual leave per annum. Pro-rata arrangements will be made for part-time workers. Where provision is included in an employee's arrangement he/she may request to cash out up to two weeks of annual leave.

Personal/Carers Leave (including sick leave) - Fulltime employees will be entitled to ten days paid personal leave per annum. Personal leave will be cumulative from year to year.

Parental Leave (including maternity leave) - After at least one years service, employees will be entitled to fifty-two weeks of unpaid parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

Maximum Ordinary Hours - Ordinary hours will be thirty-eight hours per week averaged over a period of up to twelve months. The employer will be able to require an employee to work reasonable additional hours. Penalty rates for overtime will remain part of awards or agreements.

Under this system, State Awards (like the SACS Award) will be reverted to "transitional Federal Agreements" for a period of three years. The terms and conditions will be preserved unless the Fair Pay and Conditions Standard is more generous. The "transitional Federal Agreements" will be subject to some restriction on their content, depending on whether they are allowable award matters. Some clauses, such as payroll deduction of union dues will be prohibited. For more information see:

<http://www.workchoices.gov.au/>

Workplace Surveillance Act 2005

As of 7th October 2005, employers risk prosecution if they spy on employees' internet and email use without notice or proper authority. The new NSW Workplace Surveillance Act 2005 prohibits employers from undertaking surveillance of employees at work unless they have been given prior warning or a "covert surveillance authority" has been issued by a magistrate.

Meeting Tips

Sometimes committee meetings can become somewhat strained as personal differences between members can emerge in meetings. Outi Flynn's book "meet Smarter: A Guide to Better Non-profit Board Meetings" has the following suggestions for committee members:

- Arrive on time and stay until meeting closes
- Read all material sent out prior to the meeting
- Avoid judgement statements
- Discuss issues not people
- Respect others right to speak
- Do not monopolise the discussion
- Ask questions
- Keep confidential information confidential
- Only discuss committee business with the committee
- Recognise and disclose and conflict of interest that you may have.

Handling Complaints

There are six key areas for effective complaints handling:

1. The organisation is committed to the fair and efficient resolution of complaints - there is an established, documented system for dealing with complaints. The policy outlines safeguards against retribution and outlines the confidentiality and communication requirements.
2. The complaints process is visible - new clients are made aware of the process and reminders occur regularly.
3. The complaints process is accessible to all clients - the process should be easy for clients and need not be in writing. Act on all complaints received.
4. The complaints process should be quick and courteous.
5. The complaints process has the capacity to determine and implement outcomes.
6. Complaints are used to inform policy, planning and practice.

For more information, see <http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au>



