

# NSW/ACT INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNON

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The NSW/ACT IEU supports the ACTU in its recognition that one of the major struggles of the trade union movement has been for better conditions, including the prevention of injury and ill health caused by the industrial environment, and likewise its belief that:
- i. the emphasis placed on occupational health and safety problems by the community has been insufficient;
  - ii. workers' health and safety is not the exclusive province of government and employers. Although the primary responsibility for ameliorating the hazards at work rests with those who create them the trade union movement must accept an increasing responsibility in the area of occupational health and safety;
  - iii. there is inadequate public information, research and accountability on the issue of occupational health;
  - iv. the incidence of death, injury and disease is not only too high, but, in addition, some specific groups are exposed to higher risks;
  - v. there is a need for uniformity and enforceability in our legislative safeguards;
  - vi. although uniform laws are essential, such laws are no substitute for an aware and informed membership;
  - vii. the primary element of all programs should be prevention.
- 1.2 Because of this, any occupational health and safety policy should be based on the long standing principles as endorsed by the ACTU:
- i. every worker has a right to work in an environment that is healthy, safe and free of the adverse effects of stress;
  - ii. employers have an obligation to provide a work environment that is healthy, safe and free of the adverse effects of stress;
  - iii. workers have a right to know what hazards they are exposed to at work, and employers have an obligation to provide this information;
  - iv. improvements in workers' health and safety can predominantly be achieved by collective action to improve conditions, rather than by personal changes in 'life style'; hence health and safety is a legitimate trade union issue;
  - v. improvements in workers' health and safety should be won through reducing hazards at source, and modifying the workplace to fit the needs of people's behaviour, or adapting them to fit the demands of a hazardous workplace;

- vi. governments have a responsibility to develop, review and enforce basic standards and criteria that define a safe and healthy working environment;
- vii. the victims of occupational injury and disease should be cared for by comprehensive financial compensation without prejudice to common law action, and by readily available rehabilitation and health care services.

## **2.0 GOALS**

- 2.1 The NSW/ACT IEU is committed to involving all members in promoting, addressing and maintaining workplaces that are safe and without risks to health.
- 2.2 Every employer must ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all his/her employees.
- 2.3 The principal goal of any occupational health and safety policy is to meet the fundamental right of members to safe and healthy work and promote the health and well being of members and students in our schools, colleges and early childhood services.

According to the World Health Organisation this involves:

- i. the promotion and maintenance of the higher degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations;
- ii. the prevention among workers of departures from health caused by working conditions;
- iii. the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health;
- iv. the placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to physiological and psychological needs.

## **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 The establishment of health and safety committees and/or reps in all schools, colleges and early childhood services and the encouragement of locally-based action in the pursuit of conditions conducive to health.
- 3.2 Employers should implement the decisions of workplace health and safety committees and representatives.
- 3.3 Employers should implement the OHS decisions of staff where committees and reps do not exist.
- 3.4 Employers to provide the resources for the training of health and safety committee members and OHS representatives on matters pertinent to the health and safety of employees at their workplace. Such training to be in work time, its emphasis to be oriented towards prevention and promotion.
- 3.5 The IEU to provide information and training on occupational health and safety matters to members.

- 3.6 A commitment to accurate and up-to-date occupational health literature and the development of health and safety resources.
- 3.7 Encouragement of a climate that is conducive to the development of safe systems of work and attitudes that are positive to health and safety issues.
- 3.8 The development of policies and health standards on particular occupational health issues.
- 3.9 Negotiations with employers in order to develop health and safety agreements.
- 3.10 Workplace delegates on health and safety committees (NSW) or designated work groups (ACT) should be IEU members.
- 3.11 The IEU has the right to inspect premises suspected of being in breach of the OHS legislation.
- 3.12 Placing emphasis on the welfare of members in the workplace with a particular focus on stress and burnout; recognising that health and safety goes beyond analysing the physical environment.
- 3.13 That full support be given to UnionsNSW , the ACT Trades and Labour Council and the ACTU in their occupational health policies and initiatives.
- 3.14 That support be given to the funding of non-government pro-union occupational health services and in particular the Workers Health Centre.

## **4.0 STRATEGIES**

- 4.1 Health and safety committees, work groups and/or OHS officer(s) should be established in all schools, colleges, and early childhood centres.
- 4.2 Health and safety committees and/or representatives to be established through union action and resourcing via Newsmonth and the various briefings. One IEU organiser to be given a job of resourcing and assisting the establishment and ongoing work of committees and representatives.
- 4.3 IEU members at the workplace should elect an IEU member as their delegate to the Committee.
- 4.4 Priority given to the establishment of regional committees e.g. Various dioceses, K.U., in order to address issues common to a number of workplaces.
- 4.5 Newsmonth to be used as a vehicle for occupational health information for members.

- 4.6 Employers should provide paid leave so that members can attend UnionsNSW and IEU seminars on occupational health and safety.
- 4.7 IEU to develop a variety of training programmes including relevant tutorials and symposia on teacher specific topics such as stress, safe classroom practices, etc.
- 4.8 Development of a health and safety kit for IEU members who are health and safety committee members. Kit to include such things as a health and safety survey checklist, updates on health information, policy decisions etc.
- 4.9 Encouragement of information / action flow and exchange by way of safety bulletins, etc.
- 4.10 Schools, colleges and early childhood service based committees should actively communicate the occupational health and safety problems of the school to the school community. This is particularly so with health problems that can have a direct impact on the health of students. These could be reported via bulletins to P & F meetings etc.
- 4.11 Occupational health and safety policies on particular issues of concern to IEU members to be developed from time to time e.g. AIDS, stress.
- 4.12. The IEU will support members if breaches occur of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (NSW) or the Occupational Health and Safety Act (ACT) by referring such matters to the relevant employer body, UnionsNSW, ACT Trades and Labour Council, WorkCover NSW and ACT WorkCover.
- 4.13 Full IEU support will be given to members to take direct industrial action in situations they believe to be seriously prejudicial to their students or their own health and safety.
- 4.14 The IEU exercises its legal right to inspect premises suspected of being unsafe.
- 4.15 To be affiliated to the Workers Health Centre.

## **5.0 IN SUMMARY**

That the IEU Occupational Health and Safety Committee regularly reviews, monitors, develops and distributes programs for members based on this policy.