

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

Including Physical Conditions in Schools

The DET Injury Prevention Agreement 2005 came into force in 2006 when the AEU – ACT Branch, other relevant unions and the Department signed the document. This agreement details the broad OH&S processes that operate and some of the rights and responsibilities of each of the parties, including OH&S representatives, in that process.

The AEU believes all OH&S representatives and members should have the following rights:

OH&S Representatives

1. The Department will provide all teacher OH&S Representatives with a minimum of 40 hours per annum (approximately 1 hour per week) release from classroom teaching duties.
2. The release time is for the use of the teacher OH&S Representative, or Deputy, to cover in-school consultations, one-off site inspections and to assist in the co-ordination and implementation of the annual self-administered school safety checks.
3. Representatives may require additional time to undertake their duties. As far as reasonably practicable, time should be made available to them to carry out their duties during non teaching time.
4. Release time is not only intended to compensate for the time spent on their duties but also to assist the school to resolve difficulties of student supervision during detailed OH&S inspections and one off cases that require the release of the Representative/Deputy Representative from teaching duties.
5. If an emergency arises, Representatives/Deputy Representatives may utilise whatever time is required to resolve the issue. This may be teaching or incidental time.

Physical Conditions in Schools

1. The AEU believes that members have a right to decline to teach in situations where classroom temperatures are lower than 17 degrees Celsius or more than 30 degrees Celsius.
2. Whenever physical conditions become distressing to students and intolerable to staff:
 - (a) members should advise the OH&S representative;
 - (b) the OH&S Representative should immediately consult with the Principal/manager of the site and verify the actual temperature of the location;
 - (c) the OH&S Representative, with the support of the AEU Sub-Branch, should request appropriate action be taken to rectify the situation. This action may include implementing procedures for the relocation or cancellation of classes.
 - (d) the OH&S representative or the Sub-Branch may at any time seek the involvement of the AEU officers to assist in rectifying the situation.