

Australian Education Union

TAFE Fact Sheet:

OH&S - What is my Role? What are my Responsibilities?

Because the union movement was involved in the creation of OH&S legislation in Australia, we are involved in the implementation of that legislation. For the purposes of OH&S, the Institute is divided up into 23 units which are called "designated work groups" [DWGs]. These are groups of workers who occupy a common area, and may or may not work together on common sorts of tasks. DWGs are established in areas, buildings or parts of buildings which are designated for specific purposes [eg teaching areas, labs, administration areas etc]. Each DWG is designated as a particular union's site depending on the union affiliation of the majority of the employees at that site. Therefore, there are AEU and CPSU sites for OH&S purposes within CIT.

One Health and Safety Representative [HSR] and one Deputy HSR positions are elected biannually by staff in each DWG. These HSRs are required under the legislation to receive OH&S training and also refresher training each 2 years, to equip them to perform these roles.

In anticipation of legislative changes to occur from 1 July 2009, CIT has proposed the development of campus based Health and Safety Consultative Committees, each of which will supply a single, elected HSR from each campus to the CIT OHS Policy Committee [OHSPC] which will establish and review OHS policy across the CIT.

In order to ensure that teachers' OH&S concerns are heard and duly considered by the CIT OHSPC it is important that all AEU HSR designated positions are filled. Therefore, the AEU recommends that AEU members nominate for all positions as HSRs in their work areas. The AEU will arrange quarterly meetings of HSRs to support members in their roles in maintaining a healthy and safe work environment.

It should be noted that HSRs are elected by all of the employees who occupy a DWG and are responsible to all of them, not just those who share their union affiliation. This means that HSRs elected through AEU processes are equally responsible for teaching, administrative, technical and other CIT staff who share their working space. Everyone working within a DWG has certain responsibilities regarding occupational health and safety, not just the representatives/deputies who are specifically trained in OH&S.

EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work safely, using correct safety equipment provided.
- Alert your Representative/Deputy to potentially hazardous situations in your workplace.

**** If your Representative/Deputy is not aware of a hazardous situation, they cannot fix it!***

HEALTH & SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Make regular inspections of the workplace
- Report to and liaise with Managers concerning actual or potential hazards in the workplace.
- Inform workers of their presence as H&S Representative and invite input from staff.
- Use their considerable powers under the Act as and when necessary.

The Representative/Deputy is not obliged to act on every complaint or piece of information that is referred to him/her from members of the DWG. The [trained] Representative should be in a position to make a judgement as to the best way to deal with a complaint from staff. However, Representatives need to be aware of the importance of taking seriously any complaint received, and investigating it.

- ***Remember that a good Representative/Deputy is someone who is active and seen to be active in pursuing OH&S concerns of colleagues.***
- ***Members who feel that their concerns are not being met by their H&S Representative/Deputy should contact the AEU Office for assistance in dealing with the issue.***