

Organizational Development Session

Workchoices – What it means for the community sector

Key themes / issues / questions arising from discussion:

Session focussed on the recently implemented Workchoices legislation and what it means for the community services sector. Speakers included representatives from the WRMC, Employment Law Centre and the Australian Services Union. Key themes included:

- What organisations are affected by changes and what does it mean to be a constitutional corporation
- The degree of trade (fee for service) that community organisations undertake and how this affects their status as a constitutional corporation
- How the role of unions have changed under the legislation
- The trends being seen by the Employment Law Centre since implementation of reforms
- The difficulties faced by community sector organisations in meeting the administrative and legal requirements included in the reforms

Discussion from session included:

- Many community organisations are confused about whether they are constitutional corporations and there is a need for individual organisations to be able to ascertain this information. There is also the need for sector wide information and support.
- There is a lack of union membership within the sector and this limits ease of undertaking collective bargaining
- There was concern particularly around unfair dismissal changes and what this means for both employers and employees.

In the six weeks since the introduction of work choices, noted trends include:

- Employees being offered inferior conditions particularly in regards to overtime
- Greater prevalence of reports of people working in unsafe conditions
- People cashing in 2 weeks of annual leave and some feeling like they are pressured to do so
- Increased prevalence of people being dismissed as a result of operational issues